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In Praise of the Guru: A Translation and Study of Sainapati's *Sri Gursobha*

A Dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy
in Religious Studies

by

Ami Praful Shah

Committee in charge:

Professor Gurinder Singh Mann, Chair

Professor Mark Juergensmeyer

Professor Vesna A. Wallace

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The dissertation of Ami Praful Shah is approved.

Vesna A. Wallace

Mark Juergensmeyer

Gurinder Singh Mann, Committee Chair

September 2010

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Ami Praful Shah

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Imagine a single golden yoke floating upon an endless sea. What is the likelihood of a blind turtle surfacing every one hundred years and finding that golden yoke? They say that *that* is how rare a human birth is. Deeply aware of my good fortune, I am thankful for the precious opportunity of my human life. And, in all honesty, the only truly good thing I have ever done in this life is to have been born to my parents, Kishori and Praful Shah. Their love and blessings are the source and extent of my world.

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VITA OF AMI PRAFUL SHAH

September 2010

EDUCATION

Bachelor of Arts in Middle Eastern Languages and Cultures, Columbia College,
New York City, May 1995

Master of Arts in Religious Studies, University of California, Santa Barbara, June
2004

Doctor of Philosophy in Religious Studies, University of California, Santa
Barbara, September 2010 (expected)

ACADEMIC EMPLOYMENT

Teaching Assistant, University of California, Santa Barbara

Introduction to the Study of Religion (RS 1) Fall 1999

Asian American Literature (ASAM 5) Spring 1999

History of Modern South Asia (GBST 142), Winter 2002

Reader, University of California, Santa Barbara

Indian Philosophy (RS 162A), Fall 2004

Instructor, University of California, Santa Barbara

First Year Intensive Hindi (RS 11A/11B), Winter and Spring 2001

Second Year Hindi/Urdu (RS 11D/11E/11F), Fall, Winter, Spring 2001-
2002

First Year Hindi (RS 11A/11B), Fall 2002 and Winter 2003

Second Year Hindi (RS 11D), Fall 2003

Introduction to Jainism (RS 162D), Spring 2003 and Spring 2004

Hindu Gods and Goddesses, Winter 2006

PUBLICATIONS

Introduction to Punjabi: A Language Manual, Gurinder Singh Mann, Gurdit
Singh, Ami P. Shah, Gibb Schreffler, Anne E. Murphy (*forthcoming*)

“The Leader of the Sodhis: Kavi Kankan’s Account of Guru Gobind Singh’s
Life,” “Return to Anandgarh: Sainapati and the Sovereign Destiny of the *Panth*,”

“The Rise of the Rahit: Sainapati and the Conduct of the Khalsa,” and “The Guru
and the Goddess: Chakka Chand Bhagauti Ju Ka and the Rise of the *Tisar Panth*”
in *Guru Gobind Singh: New Sources, New Voices*, ed. Gurinder Singh Mann
(*forthcoming*).

“Liturgical Compositions in the *Dasam Granth*” *Journal of Punjab Studies* 15,
1& 2 (Fall 2008)

“*Ugradanti* and the Rise of the *Tisar Panth*” *Journal of Punjab Studies* 15, 1& 2
(Fall 2008)

“Punjabi Poetry,” *Journal of Punjab Studies* 13, 1&2 (Fall 2006)

“Review of Tai Yong Tan and Gyanesh Kudaisya, *The Aftermath of Partition in South Asia*” *Journal of Punjab Studies* 11.2 (Fall 2004)

“Review of O.P. Narula, *I Still Remember: A Small Town in Punjab*” *Journal of Punjab Studies* 11.1 (Spring 2004)

AWARDS

American Institute of Indian Studies Junior Fellowship, 2006-2007

FIELDS OF STUDY

Major Field: South Asian Religion and Culture

Studies in Sikh and Punjab Studies with Gurinder Singh Mann

Studies in South Asian Devotional Traditions with Mark Juergensmeyer

Studies in Kingship and South Asian polytheism with David G. White

Abstract

In Praise of the Guru: A Translation and Study of Sainapati's *Sri Gursobha*

by

Ami Praful Shah

This study is first and foremost a project of translation. Composed by the poet Sainapati during the years 1701-1708, the *Sri Gursobha*, "In Praise of the Guru," is a contemporary written narrative of the life and death of the last human Guru of the Sikh tradition, Guru Gobind Singh (1661/6-1708). Written in the north Indian vernacular languages of Punjabi and Braj Bhasa and recorded in the distinctive *gurmukhi* script, the *Sri Gursobha* is a contemporary eyewitness account of the Guru's life and an invaluable source of information on the life of Guru Gobind Singh and the history of the Sikh community at the turn of the eighteenth century in northern India. However, despite its importance it has been of limited scholarly value because there has thus far been no available translation of the text in English. By providing the first English translation of the *Sri Gursobha* based on manuscript evidence and printed editions, this study will introduce a source of critical importance to our understanding of the Sikh tradition. In addition to furnishing a translation of the *Sri Gursobha*, this study will examine the development of the Sikh literary corpus from the time of the first to the final human Guru of the Sikh tradition, Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh, respectively. Chapter One will situate the emergence of the *Sri Gursobha* within

the parameters of textual production during the Guru period (c. 1500-1708). Chapter Two will examine the narrative of the *Sri Gursobha* with a particular focus on its presentation of critical events that informed the life and legacy of Guru Gobind Singh. Chapter Three will compare the narrative of the Guru's life and mission as found in the *Sri Gursobha* with three other contemporary narratives – *Apani Katha*, *Das GurKatha*, and *Parchi Patshahi Dasvin Ki* – written during the lifetime of Guru Gobind Singh and in the immediate aftermath of his death in 1708.

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Introduction: In the Gurus' Shadow

Your culture is ancient, your dignity peerless
Taksila, a distant reminder of your history
Nature has fashioned you as a cradle of sages and *avatars*
Of Sufis, martyrs, devotees, heroes and virtuous women
Searching for the truth, when the call for battle resounded
Then emerged a Tabrez, a Puran, and a Prahlad
You witnessed the arrows of Lav and Kush, the battles of the Mahabharata
Guru Arjan and Guru Tegh Bahadur gave their lives for you
You have nurtured Guru Nanak and Sheikh Farid
To illuminate the world, you have lit many brilliant lamps.¹
“Punjab” by Dhani Ram Chatrik

In the *Puratan Janam Sakhi*, a king named Shivanabh asks where he can meet the great man (*mahapurakh*) whose sight alone can deliver liberation in the Kaliyug. He is told that “A place named Kartarpur has been built thirty miles [fifteen *kos*] outside of Lahore, in the land of Punjab, and Baba Nanak resides there.”² While the emergence of Punjab as an administrative term denoting the province of Lahore can be dated to the reign of the Mugal Emperor Akbar (r. 1556-1605), during that same period, the Punjab also came to be identified as the

¹ ਤੇਰੀ ਤਹਿਜੀਬ ਕਦੀਮੀ ਹੈ, ਇਕਬਾਲ ਤੇਰਾ ਲਾਸਾਨੀ ਹੈ, ‘ਤਕਸਿਲਾ’ ਤੇਰੇ ਇਤਿਹਾਸਾਂ ਦੀ ਇਕ ਪੁੰਦਲੀ ਜਿਹੀ ਨਿਸ਼ਾਨੀ ਹੈ। ਕੁਦਰਤ ਪੰਥੂੜਾ ਘੜਿਆ ਸੀ ਤੈਨੂੰ ਰਿਸ਼ੀਆਂ ਅਵਤਾਰਾਂ ਦਾ, ਸੂਫੀਆਂ, ਸ਼ਹੀਦਾਂ, ਭਗਤਾਂ ਦਾ, ਬਲਬੀਰਾਂ, ਸਤੀਆਂ ਨਾਰਾਂ ਦਾ, ਸਚਿਆਈਓਂ ਸਦਕਾ ਲੈਣ ਲਈ, ਜਦ ਬੋਲਿਆ ਮਾਰੂ ਨਾਦ ਕੋਈ, ਤਦ ਨਿਕਲ ਪਿਆ ਤਬਰੇਜ਼ ਕੋਈ, ਪੂਰਨ ਕੋਈ, ਪ੍ਰਹਿਲਾਦ ਕੋਈ। ਲਵ, ਕੁਸ਼ ਦੇ ਤੀਰ ਰਹੇ ਵਰੁਦੇ, ਮਹਾਭਾਰਤ ਦੇ ਘਮਸਾਨ ਰਹੇ, ਗੁਰੂ ਅਰਜਨ ਤੇਗ ਬਹਾਦਰ ਜਿਹੇ ਤੇਰੇ ਤੋਂ ਦੇਂਦੇ ਜਾਨ ਰਹੇ। ਬਾਬਾ ਨਾਨਕ, ਬਾਬਾ ਫਰੀਦ, ਆਪਣੀ ਛਾਤੀ ਤੇ ਪਾਲੇ ਤੂੰ, ਦੁਨੀਆ ਨੂੰ ਚਾਨਣ ਦੇਣ ਲਈ, ਕਈ ਰੋਸ਼ਨ ਦੀਵੇ ਬਾਲੇ ਤੂੰ।

² ਜੀ ਲਾਹੌਰ ਤੇ ਕੋਸ ਪੰਦਰਾਂ ਕਰਤਾਰ ਪੁਰ ਬੰਨਿਆ ਹੈ ਪੰਜਾਬ ਕੀ ਧਰਤੀ ਮਾਹਿ ਉਹਾਂ ਗੁਰੂ ਬਾਬਾ ਨਾਨਕ ਰਹਿਤਾ ਹੈ।

place of the Guru in Sikh texts such as the *Puratan Janam Sakhi* (1588).³ The land of Punjab (*Punjab di dharti*) is the place where Guru Nanak returns after his extensive travels (*udasi*) in the four quarters between Mecca and Benaras and Kashmir and Sindh. Over millenia, the Punjab has been a shifting frontier mediating the the history of trans-continental empires stretching from the Mauryas to the Mughals and the fertile soil in which many religious traditions have taken root, but perhaps no association with the region has been more enduring than that of the Sikh Gurus.

Even in post-Independent India, as a state shorn of its historical territorial swath, now comprising less than twenty thousand square miles, the landscape of the Punjab displays the unalterable imprint of the lives and legacies of the Sikh Gurus and the history of the Sikh tradition.⁴ Indeed, the shadow of the Gurus is cast far and wide over our understanding of the region and its physical and devotional landscape and, as a result, the metaphor of their “shadow” is meant to invoke both a sense of shade – that which preserves and protects – and a sense of concealment – that which eclipses and even occludes.

³ G.S. Mann, “Stories of the Founder: The *Puratan Janam Sakhi* Re-visited.” Paper presented on November 14, 2009 at the conference *Expanding Horizons: Sikh Studies at the Turn of the 21st Century*.

⁴ For a discussion regarding the multiple definitions of the Punjab informed by varying socio-cultural considerations, political administrative concerns, and/or geographical features, see J.S. Grewal, *Social and Cultural History of the Punjab* (New Delhi: Manohar, 2004), 9-13 and Romila Thapar, “Regional History: The Punjab.” In *Cultural Pasts: Essays in Early Indian History* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000), 95-108.

While the physical imprint of the Sikh tradition is evident in material sites and objects throughout the Punjab, this dissertation will focus on the literary legacy of the tradition. Given the association of the Gurus and their Sikhs with the Punjab it is not surprising that the literary corpus associated with the Sikh tradition far outweighs any comparable corpus of either Hindu or Muslim literature from either the historical or contemporary period.⁵ Beginning with Guru Nanak, we have the emergence of a substantial written record composed in the Punjabi vernacular and the *gurmukhi* script. During the Guru period (c. 1500-1708), the Sikh literary corpus developed to include not only the scriptural text, the *Guru Granth*, but a wide variety of non scriptural texts. This dissertation will focus on one segment of the Sikh literary corpus produced during the lifetime of Guru Gobind Singh. We are fortunate to have a substantial corpus of literature written by both anonymous and identifiable poets who, in addition to other topics, composed and wrote accounts of the Guru's life. These poets would have come to

⁵ In an article entitled, "Sikhism: A Forgotten Tradition," Mark Juergensmeyer draws attention to the neglect of the Sikh tradition in the academic literature on religious traditions in general and Indian religious traditions in particular. He attributed the absence of Sikhism's inclusion in the literature on Indian religious traditions and civilization to two longstanding biases: a bias against the "modern ages" and against regionalism. See Mark Juergensmeyer, "The Forgotten Tradition: Sikhism in the Study of World Religions" in *Sikh Studies: Comparative Perspectives on a Changing Tradition*, ed. Mark Juergensmeyer and N. Gerald Barrier. (Graduate Theological Union: Berkeley, 1979), 13-24.

the Guru's *darbar* at both Paunta and Anandpur in search of patronage and/or out of devotion to the him.

In an attempt to broaden and build upon both primary and secondary source scholarship on Guru Gobind Singh's life, this dissertation will provide the first unbroken English translation of the *Sri Gursobha*, "In Praise of the Guru," written by the poet Sainapati between the years 1701-1708. Written in a linguistic admixture of Punjabi and Braj Bhasha, two north Indian vernacular languages, recorded in the *gurmukhi* script, and comprised of a variety of poetic forms and meters, the *Sri Gursobha* is divided into twenty chapters (*dhiau*) over nine hundred and thirty four verses. It is a contemporary written account of the Guru's life and death. In the first chapter of the text, Sainapati begins his narration of events with a recognition of the ten Gurus of the Sikh tradition, followed by a brief account of Guru Tegh Bahadur's martyrdom, until the main subject of his work – the life of Guru Gobind Singh – is narrativized in verse in the remaining nineteen chapters. Tasked with the mission of establishing *dharam*, Sainapati's depiction of Guru Gobind Singh blurs the line between the divine and the human; he is Vahiguru's Guru as well as Vahiguru himself. As a divine man, his mission to establish *dharam* is a multifaceted. He is at once a political leader who guides his community through a complex web of imperial machinations and treacheries; a warrior who leads his troops into battle and is himself involved in the shedding of blood; a religious figure who seeks to ensure the safety of his Sikhs in this

world and their liberation in the next; and, a father and husband who experiences the unimaginable loss of his four sons.

As one of the earliest contemporary full accounts of the Guru's life, the *Sri Gursobha* is an invaluable source for understanding the life of Guru Gobind Singh. However, as is the case with many sources in the Sikh literary corpus, problems of language and access have hampered scholarly efforts to fully understand and examine them. With regards to linguistic barriers that have prevented a more thorough accounting of Sikh literary sources, N. Gerald Barrier writes,

Confusion over sources and their use remains the most persistent factor that accounts for gaps in historiography. Scholars often claim that records are not available or are too scattered to be of value. Moreover, the language skills necessary for studying the period include Urdu (and hopefully some Persian), Panjabi (both Gurmukhi and *nastaliq* script) and Hindi, a difficulty that explains why more foreign scholars are not involved in such research.⁶

As a result of the limited linguistic abilities of any given scholar, the vast majority of Sikh literary sources have been not translated into English. This problem has been further hampered by the inability of scholars to locate and fully access the extant manuscripts of the tradition. While some scholars claim that access to the manuscript sources is limited by the opposition of religious groups to critical

⁶ N. Gerald Barrier, "The Role of Ideology and Institution Building in Modern Sikhism" in *Sikh Studies: Comparative Perspectives on a Changing Tradition*, eds. Mark Juergensmeyer and N. Gerald Barrier (Graduate Theological Union: Berkeley, 1979), 45.

textual work, the unwillingness of individual and families to share manuscripts held in their private possession, and the restriction of manuscript access to non *amritdhari* Sikhs,⁷ the fact remains that there is a significant corpus of extant manuscripts available to scholars. In spite of the physical archive of primary textual sources in the Sikh tradition is considerable, constrained by linguistic and logistical challenges, the great majority of these sources have been heretofore under utilized.

Currently, Sainapati's *Sri Gursobha* is available in two Punjabi printed editions – Ganda Singh ed., *Kavi Sainapati Racit Sri Gur Sobha* (Patiala: Publications Bureau Punjabi University, 1988) and Shamsheer Singh Ashok ed., *Sri Guru Sobha* (Amritsar: SGPC Publications, 1967). In consultation with the manuscript evidence and the printed editions of Singh and Ashok, this project of translation is premised upon the belief that translation is a “fundamental method” in the field of Religious Studies as it addresses a set of inter-related methodological and epistemological concerns.⁸

A primary methodological concern stems from the basic issue of physical access to and availability of sources. As one archive of sources, the textual record in the Sikh tradition provides us with a window into the historical development of

⁷ Jeevan Deol, "Text and Lineage in Early Sikh History: Issues in the Study of the Adi Granth" *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 64 (2001): 34-58.

⁸ John Nemecek, "Translation and the Study of Indian Religions" *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 77 (2009): 757-780.

the tradition. Through a critical examination of these textual sources we are afforded a perspective from within Sikh sources as to how historical and contemporary developments were viewed and received by certain segments of the community. While the canonical *Guru Granth* has been translated and is available in print and on the web, there are very few Sikh non-canonical sources that have been translated in their entirety, if they are even translated at all. These sources are generally available in Punjabi annotated editions, but access to them is limited to a select few scholars who can read *gurmukhi* and can understand the linguistic registers of medieval Punjabi, Braj Bhasha, and other north Indian languages. In an attempt to broaden the our knowledge of the important archive of Sikh primary sources, this project of translation aims to relate the information in these texts to the widest audience possible. In an attempt to expand access to one of the first contemporary biographies written of Guru Gobind Singh, this dissertation will provide the first entire English translation of the *Sri Gursobha*. Thus far, extremely brief translated excerpts of this text have been made available in a limited set of secondary source scholarship in English. By presenting this text in English translations for the first time, I hope to present an invaluable Sikh literary source to both specialist and non specialist readers alike.

In addition to furnishing an English translation of the *Sri Gursobha*, this dissertation will examine the inheritance and innovation represented by the *Sri Gursobha* within Sikh literary culture. Whether it be through compositions of

bards or the genres such as the *janam sakhi*, “life story” or *gurbilas*, “play of the Guru,” the importance of writing about the lives of the Gurus has formed an important strand of literature within the Sikh tradition since the time of Guru Nanak. Situated against the backdrop of the importance of writing and the inauguration of a Sikh literary culture with the person of Guru Nanak, Chapter One will situate the *Sri Gursobha* within the development of literary genres that chronicled the lives of the Gurus during the Guru period (c. 1500-1708). Having established the literary backdrop of the *Sri Gursobha*, Chapter Two will examine Sainapati’s presentation of the life and legacy of Guru Gobind Singh. As a contemporary eyewitness account of the Guru’s life, Sainapati’s narrative is an invaluable source of information on a period that witnessed the establishment of the Khalsa by the Guru and the end of the line of human Gurus in the Sikh tradition. Building upon the depiction of the Guru’s life and legacy as found in the *Sri Gursobha*, Chapter Three will compare Sainapati’s account with three other contemporary narratives written during the lifetime of Guru Gobind Singh and in the immediate aftermath of his death in 1708 -- *Apani Katha*, “My Story,” *Das GurKatha*, “Tales of the Ten Gurus,” and the *Parchi Patshahi Dasvin Ki*, “Vignettes of the Tenth Sovereign.” When read in conjunction with one another, these four accounts provide a remarkably coherent and consistent portrait of how the Guru’s life and legacy was understood within his own lifetime.

Chapter One: On Genre and the Guru

Apotheosized as an exemplar of *nirguna bhakti*, the teachings of Guru Nanak have found scholarly refuge under rubric of the Sant tradition. While elements of Guru Nanak's life and teachings conform to Sant patterns regarding the importance of the divine name (*nam*), devotion to a teacher (*satiguru*), and the company of the virtuous (*satsang*), a more compelling characterization of Guru Nanak as the founder of a new religious community known as the Sikhs, "disciples," that adhered to internal and external markers of identity has emerged in recent scholarship. The overdrawn characterization of Guru Nanak as a *sant* figure, has had ramifications for how scholars have assessed the lives of the subsequent Sikh Gurus, especially Guru Gobind Singh. The binary schema of evaluating the Gurus on a spectrum of the spiritual versus the material, has affected our periodization of Sikh history and the concomitant categorization of sources, both literary and material, available within the tradition. Focusing specifically upon Sikh literary sources, this chapter will draw attention to the unique written record of the Sikh tradition and examine the inheritance and innovations that shaped Sikh literary culture during the Guru period (c. 1500-1708). In particular, this chapter will examine the association of the Gurus with

the emergence of particular literary genres and the multifaceted portraits of the Gurus drawn in these sources.

Textualization of the Sikh tradition

In recent years there has been a growing scholarly consensus regarding the limitations of using textual sources to approach the historical and/or contemporary study of religious traditions in the subcontinent. Shifting away from a singular focus on textual presentations of Indian religious traditions, new emphases in scholarship have highlighted the importance of archaeological, epigraphic, and ethnographic sources in creating a more nuanced, relevant, and accurate portrayal of how religion is lived “on the ground.”⁹ While the limitations of this text centered approach to religious traditions has been documented in a growing body of scholarship, this critique must be tempered in the context of the Sikh tradition for a number of reasons. First, there is the basic issue of textual evidence. Unlike, the paucity of written sources available with contemporary developments in the Hindu, Buddhist, and Jain religious traditions, textual evidence from the Sikh

⁹ See Miriam Levering, ed., *Rethinking Scripture: Essays from a Comparative Perspective* (Albany: SUNY Press: 1989), Vincent Wimbush, ed., *Theorizing Scriptures: New Critical Orientations to a Cultural Phenomenon* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2008), Gregory Schopen, *Bones, Stones, and Buddhist Monks: Collected Papers on the Archaeology, Epigraphy, and Texts of Monastic Buddhism in India* (Honolulu: University Of Hawai'i Press, 1997), Richard Salomon, *Indian Epigraphy: A Guide to the Study of Inscriptions in Sanskrit, Prakrit, and the Other Indo-Aryan Languages* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), Daud Ali, ed, *Invoking the Past: The Uses of History in South Asia* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999), John Nemecek, “Translation and the Study of Indian Religious Traditions.”

tradition can be dated to the period of the first Guru, Guru Nanak. With a manuscript tradition extending back in time over four hundred years and the availability of modern printed editions of these texts, the Sikh tradition possesses an extensive textual record that can be dated in both time and space. Second, the importance and authority attached to the written word was well-established during the lifetime of Guru Nanak by the Guru himself.¹⁰ The writing and collection of the Guru's compositions began during his own lifetime and the ceremonial conferring of a *pothi* (volume) of the Guru's hymns established the legitimacy of Guru Angad's succession. Third, while scholars have highlighted the disconnection between the theory of religious belief as described in normative ideals enshrined in text and the practice of religion "on the ground," this discrepancy is not as marked in the Sikh case. Because the origins of the Sikh scriptural text and liturgical schedule were co-eval with the establishment of a community by Guru Nanak at Kartarpur, text and practice were not necessarily disconnected, but rather guided by the presence of the Guru. Over time, the ideals of the Sikh scriptural text were reflected in other literary sources of the tradition (i.e. the *vars* and *kabitts* of Bhai Gurdas, the *rahit* literature, etc) thus effecting a

¹⁰ The importance of writing the divine name is well attested to in the writings of the Gurus. See G.S. Mann, *The Making of Sikh Scripture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 10. In addition, the importance of writing is also reflected in numerous paintings of the Gurus in which the Gurus are depicted reading an open text inscribed with legible writing. Personal communication with G.S. Mann.

kind of intra-textual resonance within the tradition.¹¹ While there are bound to be disjunctures between the theory and practice of religious vision in the Sikh tradition, there is also a great deal of concordance because the *rahit* (codes of conduct) are applicable to every Sikh regardless of age, gender, socio-economic status, caste affiliation, etc. Finally, given the textual trajectory from *pothi* to *granth* documented over two centuries and the textual instantiation of the Guru in the *Guru Granth Sahib*, textuality has been of paramount importance to the Sikh tradition.¹² The importance of textual production and preservation in the Sikh community can be further understood within the three interlocking developments

¹¹ In his study of Buddhist monasticism, Schopen underscores the distinction between literary representations and actual practice. With regards to the construction of the Buddhist tradition from textual sources, he writes, “This is at best a curious kind of history, a kind of history that – to put it most simply – seems to assume if it says so in a canonical text, it must have been so in reality. It does not seem to matter, again, that there is no actual evidence that this formal doctrine was ever a part of actual Buddhist practice.” Gregory Schopen, *Bones, Stones, and Buddhist Monks* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 1997), 6. While Schopen highlights the colonial construction of the Buddhist tradition on the basis of texts, the same process cannot be said to have occurred for the Sikh tradition. These developments occurred prior to the arrival of the British and, as a result, it is not necessarily appropriate to analyze the Sikh tradition within the paradigms of the “construction” and “invention” of religious traditions during the colonial period. For an opposite position see Harjot Oberoi, *The Construction of Religious Boundaries: Culture, Identity, and Diversity in the Sikh Tradition* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997).

¹² For the growing scholarship on the non-textual sources of the Sikh tradition see For more on the material heritage of the tradition, see Anne Murphy, “Materializing Sikh Pasts,” *Sikh Formations*, 1(2005): 175-200, B.N.Goswamy, *Piety and Splendor: Sikh Heritage in Art* (New Delhi: National Museum, 2000), Kavita Singh, ed., *New Insights Into Sikh Art* (Mumbai: MARG Publications, 2003).

of the scripturalization of the tradition, the vernacularization of language, and the literacization of the community.

Scripturalization of the Tradition

During the lifetime of Guru Nanak, a *pothi* (volume) was assembled which contained his own written *bani* (sacred verses). In the *Puratan Janam Sakhi*, a *pothi*, which in all likelihood was the *Guru Harsahai Pothi* (1530s) was ceremonially given to the second Guru, Guru Angad, along with five coins at the time of his succession.¹³ From the very inception of the tradition, the physical possession of texts containing the written hymns of the Gurus were understood as legitimating sources of authority amongst those spiritual and lineal descendants claiming Guru Nanak's mantle.¹⁴ Beginning with the *Harsahai Pothi*, the

¹³ ਤਿਤੁ ਮਹਿਲ ਜੋ ਸਬਦ ਹੋਆ ਸੋ ਪੋਥੀ ਜੁਬਾਨਿ ਗੁਰੂ ਅਮਗਦ ਜੋਗ ਮਿਲੀ। While many have noted the two mounds of flowers left behind for Hindus and Muslims upon Guru Nanak's death – ਜਬ ਸਲੋਕ ਪੜਿਆ, ਤਬਿ ਬਾਬੈ ਚਾਦਰ ਉਪਰਿ ਲੈ ਕਰਿ ਸੁਤਾ। ਸੰਗਤਿ ਮਥਾ ਟੇਕਿਆ। ਜਬ ਚਾਦਰ ਉਠਾਵਨਿ ਤਾ ਕੁਛੁ ਨਾਹੀ। ਤਦਹੁ ਫੁਲ ਦੁਹਾਂ ਕੇ ਹਰੇ ਰਹੈ। ਹਿੰਦੂ ਆਪਣੇ ਲੈ ਗਏ, ਅਤੇ ਮੁਸਲਮਾਨ ਆਪਣੇ ਲੈ ਗਏ – what is less discussed is what Guru Nanak left behind for his Sikhs. Consciously rejecting the claims of his own biological children, he nominated Guru Angad as his successor and his authority was bolstered by the possession of the volume containing Guru Nanak's hymns. Bhai Vir Singh, ed. *Puratan Janam Sakhi* (New Delhi: Bhai Vir Sahit Sadan, 2006 [1926]), *sakhi* 56 & 57, 201-210. Also, according to Sikh tradition, Guru Nanak's son, Srichand, brought his ashes to Dera Baba Nanak, suggesting that the reference to the arguments between the "Hindus" and "Muslims" may be better understood as arguments between the Hindu and Muslim converts to the Sikh tradition based on their previous funerary traditions.

¹⁴ With regards to the authority of early manuscripts, G.S. Mann writes, "The significant role of early manuscripts in the claims for central authority within the community continued throughout the seventeenth century. Dhirmal captured the Kartarpur Pothi, and among other things, based his claim as the successor of Guru Nanak on his possession of it. Ramrai, another dissident, who challenged his brother Guru Harkishan and established a separate seat of power at Dehra Dun, possessed a manuscript prepared in 1659." G.S.

writings of the Sikh Gurus were collected over time in volumes such as the *Goindval Pothis* (1570s) and *Kartarpur Pothis* (1604) until the oeuvre of their writings was closed and canonized in the *Guru Granth* (1680s).¹⁵ This association of text and Guru reached its apogee with the death of Guru Gobind Singh and the elevation of the *Granth* to the status of Guru. As material objects, from the time of Guru Nanak onwards, the possession of manuscripts conferred authority, and

Mann, *The Making of Sikh Scripture*, 131. See also, Jeevan Deol, "Text and Lineage in Early Sikh History: Issues in the Study of the Adi Granth." *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 64 (2001): 34-58.

¹⁵ G.S. Mann, *The Making of Sikh Scripture*. We can also compare the *Goindval Pothis* and the *Kartarpur Pothis* with contemporary medieval sectarian and non-sectarian medieval anthologies. Sectarian affiliation here refers to the association with a particular lineage (*sampradaya*). Within the Vaisnava tradition there are four lineages (*catuh sampradaya*) associated with Ramanuja (c.1017-1137), Madhva (13th century), Vallabha (1479-1531), and Nimbarka (12th century). The sectarian anthologies of this period situate themselves within one of these four *sampradayas*. Preceding the *Kartarpur Pothis* by at least two decades, the *Fatehpur Manuscript* is a non-sectarian anthology (1582 CE) that contains a large corpus of Surdas' *padas* as well as the poems of Kabir, Namdev, Ravidas, Kanhandas, and others. While the *Fatehpur Manuscript* is not associated with any particular community, it is another example of anthologization in the medieval north Indian landscape. Furthermore, prepared north of Jaipur (Rajasthan), the *Fatehpur manuscript* is both geographically and temporally proximate to the compilation of the *Goindval Pothis*. In addition to this non sectarian manuscript are three sectarian manuscripts: the *Panchvani* which records the verses of Dadu, Kabir, Namdev, Raidas, and Haridas (late seventeenth century, compiled by disciples of the Dadu Panth); the *Sarvangi* (compiled by Dadu's disciple Rajjab c. 1570-1680 CE); and the *Caurasi Vaisnavan Ki Varta*, "Accounts of the Eighty Four Vaisnavas" associated with the Vallabha *sampradaya* (circa mid seventeenth century).

over time, they became coterminous with the Guru himself as evidenced by the transformation of the *Adi Granth* into the *Guru Granth Sahib*.¹⁶

Given the longstanding relationship between the possession of the Sikh scriptural text and conferral of authority between the Gurus, it is fair to argue that there is a deep relationship between written literature and the constitution of community in the Sikh tradition. Although the parameters of textual production and reception have changed and expanded over time to include a wide variety of canonical and non-canonical sources, the Sikh community has been since its inception a “socio-textual community” for which “literature is produced, in which it circulates, and which derives a portion of its self understanding as a community from the very act of hearing, reading, performing, reproducing, and circulating literary texts.”¹⁷ The text par excellence of the Sikh tradition is the central and canonical *Guru Granth* which contains the writings of six of the ten Gurus – Gurus Nanak, Angad, Amardas, Ramdas, Arjan, and Tegh Bahadur – and immediately establishes itself the spiritual standard against which all revelation is to be understood. At the expense of other canonical texts such as *Quran-Puran* and *Ved-Kateb*, Guru Nanak elevates the verses of the Guru (*gurbani*) in praise of

¹⁶ With regards to the canonical process in the Sikh tradition, G.S. Mann claims that “No other major religious tradition possesses manuscripts that illustrate the evolution of its scriptural sources so clearly.” G.S. Mann, *The Making of Sikh Scripture*.

¹⁷ Sheldon Pollock, “Introduction,” in *Literary Cultures in History: Reconstructions From South Asia*, ed. Sheldon Pollock (Berkeley: UC Press, 2003), 27.

a formless god above the estimation of the divine found in the aforementioned sectarian scriptures.¹⁸

In addition to the hierarchicization of divine revelation between the *Guru Granth* and scriptural texts such as the *Veda* and *Quran*, within the *Guru Granth* itself there is also a textual economy in which the writings of the Gurus are situated above the writings of over a dozen bards (*bhatts*)¹⁹ and fifteen medieval *bhagats* (devotees).²⁰ The third Guru, Guru Amardas, is credited with incorporating the *bhagat bani* (verses of the devotees) in the manuscript known as the *Goindval Pothis*.²¹ There have been many arguments proffered to explain the

¹⁸ The writings of all the Gurus enshrined are understood to participate in the same light (*jyot*) and, as a result, they share the corporate authorial epithet of “Nanak” though they can be individually differentiated by the heading of *mahal* (position, abode) under which they are listed. The verses of Guru Nanak are indicated by the heading of M1 (*mahal* 1) and the writings of the remaining five Gurus who wrote verse are identified as: Guru Angad (M2), Guru Amardas (M3), Guru Ramdas (M4), Guru Arjan (M5), and Guru Tegh Bahadur (M9).

¹⁹ “The presence of bards at the center of Sikh activities started with Mardana, a contemporary of Guru Nanak, and developed to include Balvand and Satta (1540s), the Bhatts (1581-1606), and Abdulla and Natha (post-1606). They were all poets who composed songs in praise of the Gurus in an idiom that they had acquired prior to accepting Sikh patronage. While some of them had ties with Islam, the Bhatts were Brahmins, who liked to compare the Gurus with Janak, the royal ascetic (*raj yogi*) who appears in the Ramayan.” G.S. Mann, “Sources for the Study of the Life and Times of Guru Gobind Singh,” in *The Journal of Punjab Studies*, 15 (2008), 253. See also Surjit Hans, *Reconstruction of Sikh History through Sikh Literature* (Jalandhar: ABS Publications, 1988), 179-180.

²⁰ The list of *bhagats* included in the *Guru Granth Sahib* include: Kabir, Farid, Namdev, Ravidas, Beni, Bhikhan, Dhanna, Jaidev, Paramanand, Pipa, Ramanand, Sadhna, Sain, Surdas, and Trilochan.

²¹ G.S. Mann, *The Making of Sikh Scripture*.

presence of the *bhagat bani* in the Sikh scriptural text,²² but whatever the reasons may have been, given the structural integrity of the *bhagat bani* in the *Goindval Pothis*, *Kartarpur Pothi*, and ultimately, the *Adi Granth*, it is evident that the Gurus envisioned an intimate yet hierarchical relationship between the light of Nanak's revelation and the reflection of that light in the poems of the *bhagats*.²³ Thus, the contours of Sikh literary culture were first articulated in the written verse of the Gurus who both situated the volume of their writing against other major scriptural texts, i.e. *Ved-Kateb* and *Quran-Puran*, **and** against the compositions of medieval *sants* and *bhaktas* within their own canonical text. As the Guru entrusted with the divine revelation, Guru Nanak self consciously tailored the deployment of that language and script to create a distinct "socio-textual" community that has persisted for almost five hundred years. As a poet,

²² For more on scholarly analysis on the *bhagat bani* see Harjot Oberoi, *The Construction of Religious Boundaries*, Pashaura Singh, *The Guru Granth Sahib – Canon, Meaning, and Authority* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2006), G.S. Mann, *The Making of Sikh Scripture*.

²³ Whereas scholars such as Harjot Oberoi argue that in the seventeenth century the *Adi Granth* was marked by "heterodox textuality" and that it a "manifestation of a fluid Sikh identity than a signifier of exclusivity," an examination of the development of the text based on manuscript evidence reveals a different story. Harjot Oberoi, *The Construction of Religious Boundaries*, 55. Far from reflecting a fluid shape-shifting field of poetic verse, the history of the development of the Sikh scriptural reflects the conscious efforts of the Gurus to structure a sectarian record of revelation. G.S. Mann writes, "The final product of the several stages of evolution that began with the Guru Harsahai Pothi and culminated in the *Adi Granth* amply manifests the care that went into its conception and development; its structural complexity, both in terms of sequencing of *rags* and the placement of hymns of varied length and authorship within each *rag* section, far exceeds that of other religious compilations of the time." G.S. Mann, *The Making of Sikh Scripture*, 99.

Guru Nanak presided over the emergence of Punjabi as a literary language sacralized through its association with the *gurmukhi* script.

Vernacularization of Language

In “The Cosmopolitan Vernacular” Sheldon Pollock attempts to theorize the vernacularization of South Asia,” by tracing the contours of the ‘Sanskrit cosmopolis’ as it was slowly replaced the ‘cosmopolitan vernacular’ at the turn of the second millenium.²⁴ According to Pollock, the vernacular turn was defined by a number of binaries – *marga/desi*, translocal/local – and was mediated by the interests of political elites to create new forms of literary and political expression in emerging regional polities. Disagreeing with the view that the catalyst for vernacularization was driven by religious imperatives or popular movements, Pollock instead focuses on the role of the court and political actors in the production and deployment of vernacular languages. He writes,

The religious determinant in language choice in general has been vastly overdrawn for premodern South Asia; in the particular case of the so-called rebellion in religious consciousness termed devotionalism (*bhakti*), nothing suggests it can be isolated as a significant let alone primary dynamic in the history of South Asian vernacularization. Some northern Indian vernaculars came first to be employed for written literature altogether outside the brahmanical tradition: Hindi in the west, for example, by Mas'ud Sa'd Salman in Lahore ca. 1100, Avadhi in the east by

²⁴ Sheldon Pollock, “Introduction” In *Literary Cultures in History: Reconstructions from South Asia*, 39-130.

Maulana Daud in Jaunpur at the end of the fourteenth century. And many vernacular inaugurations show no concern with religious devotionism whatever.²⁵

By minimizing the role of a devotional, or largely religious, dynamic in the the supercession of the Sanskrit inscriptional and literary record by vernacular others, Pollock draws his broad conclusions from a study of the development of Kannada literary culture.²⁶ However, when applied to processes of vernacularization and the development of literary cultures in Punjab, Pollock's theorization falls short. First, in comparison to developments in the vast expanse of the subcontinent, it is unclear how dominant Sanskrit was in the Punjab with regards to the literary (*kavya*, *prasasti*) and inscriptional records. Compared to the rest of India, the inscriptional record in the historical Punjab is relatively sparse. Spanning the Indus to the Yamuna, the early inscriptional record in the historical Punjab is minimal regardless of whether the language is Sanskrit, Prakrit, or Punjabi.²⁷ Second, in contrast to the sway of Sanskrit, it appears that Persian was perhaps as important, if not more important than Sanskrit from the late ninth century onwards. Even though it is quite cliché to note the number of invasions

²⁵ Sheldon Pollock, "The Cosmopolitan Vernacular," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 57, no. 1 (1998), 29.

²⁶ On the inter-relationship between *bhakti* and the development of vernacular languages see A.K. Ramanujan, *Hymns for the Drowning* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), 129.

²⁷ See Richard A. Salomon, *Indian Epigraphy: A Guide to the Study of Inscriptions in Sanskrit, Prakrit, and the Other Indo-Aryan Languages* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 86-109.

and/or the names of invaders entering the subcontinent through the Punjab, the fact remains that historically the Punjab has been part and parcel of many polities stretching from the Middle East to South Asia. In addition to its shifting position in the gravitational forcefield of trans-continental empire, as early as the eighth century, the Punjab was the site of both an Arabic expansion and an emerging Islamic presence. Given the establishment of Ghaznavid power in the eleventh century in the northwest of India – Lahore was referred to as “little Ghazna” – and the development of the Persian literary tradition in the Punjab and north India, it is not at all evident that the seeds of the Sanskrit cosmopolis formed the literary terra out of which the vernacular emerged. The Punjab was as much a part of the Perso-Islamic world as it was of the Sanskrit cosmopolis, thus seriously challenging Pollock’s claim that “Vernacular beginnings were tentative in a literary space entirely dominated by Sanskrit.”²⁸

²⁸ Sheldon Pollock, “Introduction,” 17 and “The Cosmopolitan Vernacular.” In his essay, “The Culture and Politics of Persian in Precolonial Hindustan” Muzaffar Alam writes, “From one perspective, then northern India became a part of the Perso-Islamic world in precisely the same way as did Transoxania, Ghazna, or Ghur. Just as Bukhara, Tirmiz, Nishapur, Isfarain, Sabzavar, and Heart were important in this cultural landscape, so too Delhi and Lahore acquired a place there and a reputation. In the thirteenth century there was a certain degree of cultural integration with a coherent Perso-Islamic identity (in opposition to the Arab culture) that is identified with the term “Ajam.” Muzaffar Alam, “The Culture and Politics of Persian in Precolonial Hindustan” in *Literary Cultures in History: Reconstructions from South Asia*, ed. Sheldon Pollock. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003: 134. Travelling through the northwest, both the seventh century Chinese monk Hsuen Tsang and eleventh century Islamic scholar Al-Biruni comment on the use of Sanskrit in the region but they make a distinction between the use of these languages in the Indian heartland i.e. Gangetic plains, and in frontier regions like the Punjab. See J.S. Grewal, *Social and Cultural History of the Punjab: Prehistoric, Ancient, and Early Medieval* (New Delhi: Manohar, 2004), 114-170.

It is against this complicated linguistic backdrop that we must situate the emergence of the Punjabi vernacular. While it is true that there is no pre-given relationship between language and community, and that the Sikh Gurus did not possess a monopoly over the language, in the case of Punjabi, it is difficult to concede Pollock's point that vernacularization was not driven by religious imperatives. In the case of Punjabi, the simultaneous development of both a vernacular language and literary culture find expression in the writings of the Sikh Gurus. As an upper caste educated Khatri employed in the regional administration of Daulat Khan Lodi, Guru Nanak would have been familiar with Persian and Arabic, and to a lesser degree, Sanskrit. Against this backdrop of education and employment it is extremely significant that Guru Nanak chose Punjabi as the vehicle for his received revelations. Unlike other medieval *bhakti* poets, Guru Nanak would have been conversant in a trans-local languages such as Persian and local vernaculars such as Punjabi, and as a result, his choice of language(s) would have been determined by a number of factors ranging from functional and logistical to ideological and aesthetic. The writings of Guru Nanak and subsequent Sikh Gurus, and the works of Sikh commentators such as Bhai Gurdas (1551-1636), provided the foundation for a Sikh literary culture expressed

in the Punjabi vernacular idiom.²⁹ The Gurus' writings are the earliest examples of writing in both verse and prose that we possess in Punjabi. Although Punjabi was a linguistic medium of expression for Sufis beginning with Baba Farid (1173-1265) and continuing with Shah Hussain (1539-1599), Sultan Bahu (1629-1690), and Bulleh Shah (1680-1758), it was not until the compilation of the *bhagat bani* in the early Sikh scriptural manuscripts that we have any written record of Baba Farid. Punjabi had associations with different religious and social communities, but it was the use of a distinctive script – *gurmukhi* – that distinguished the use of Punjabi in Sikh contexts.³⁰ Thus in addition to deploying Punjabi as the language of their compositions, the Sikh Gurus further distinguished their literary corpus by the creation of a new script.

²⁹ For more on the relationship between the emergence of Punjabi prose and the *janam sakhi* literature see W.H. McLeod, *Early Sikh Tradition* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), 268-269.

³⁰ The reference to the importance of Gurmukhi occurs early in the tradition as found in the following verse from the Goindval Pothis (ਗੁਰੂ ਅੰਗਦ ਗੁਰਮੁਖੀ ਅਖਰੁ ਬਨਾਏ {ਤੇ} ਬਾਬੇ ਦੇ ਅਗੇ ਸ਼ਬਦੁ ਭੇਟ ਕੀਤਾ ॥ Guru Angad created the Gurmukhi alphabet and offered a hymn to Baba [Nanak] Folio 216). In the *Chaupa Singh Rahitnama*, the revered status of *gurmukhi* is highlighted – ਗੁਰੂ ਕਾ ਸਿਖ ਗੁਰਮੁਖੀ ਅਦਬ ਕਰੇ ॥ ਪੈਰ ਹੇਠ ਨ ਆਵਨ ॥ ਪ੍ਰਤੀਆਂ ਨਾ ਬੰਨੇ ॥ 137. Within Guru Nanak's conceptual framework the status of Gurmukhi “corresponded with that of Arabic and Devanagari, the sacred scripts of the Muslims and Hindus, respectively.” G.S. Mann, *The Making of Sikh Scripture*, 5. Whereas, the hymns extolling the importance of the *gurmukhi* script and the evidence regarding its importance in recording the revelation of the Gurus is present from the time of Guru Nanak onwards, scholars such as Harjot Oberoi argue that *gurmukhi* became a “separatist symbol” of the Sikhs only during the colonial period. See Harjot Oberoi, *The Construction of Religious Boundaries*, 349.

The Gurus do not refer to their language as Punjabi, but rather use the term *subhasa*, “auspicious speech.”³¹ This descriptive term resonates with similar terms used by other medieval poets in their articulation of *bhakti*. Broadly speaking, the Gurus’ language participated in *sant bhasa*, the religious *linga franca* that tied together many north Indian devotional traditions. This use of vernacular and spoken language was described by Kabir as “flowing water” in comparison to the stationary and stagnant water of Sanskrit.³² In addition to the Gurus’ use of the term *subhasa*, an early non-Sikh source, the *Dabistan-e-Mazahib* (1645) whose authorship is attributed to Mohsin Fani, refers to the language of the Sikhs as “the language of the Jats” and describes it as follows,

Nanak’s *Bani*, that is, his verses, are concerned entirely with inward addresses [to God], [good] counsels, and exhortations; and most of his utterances are in respect of God’s greatness and His sanctity. All those [verses] are in the language of the Jatts of the Punjab. “Jatt” in the dialect of the Punjab means villager, a rustic. His followers have no attachment to the Sanskrit language.³³

While the observation regarding the use of the vernacular as opposed to Sanskrit is notable in this passage, what is more striking is the association of the vernacular with the Jats, a demographic group that would have constituted a considerable segment of the Sikh community. Often described as non-literate and

³¹ Adi Granth 6:11, Mahala 5

³² A.K. Ramanujan, *Hymns for the Drowning*.

³³ J.S. Grewal and Irfan Habib, *Sikh History From Persian Sources* (New Delhi: Tulika, 2001), 63. In addition to the term “Jatki” signifying the language of the Jats, it is also another term for agriculture.

agricultural, it is significant that this community was so intimately associated with the language used by the Gurus, who themselves were Khatri. Although writing has been central to the Sikh tradition from its very inception, the use of a vernacular so intimately associated with the a demographic that constituted a large percentage of the community suggests that literacy may have been far more widespread than previously assumed.

Literacization of the Community

Since the time of Guru Nanak the two groups most representative of the community have been Jats and Khatri. Given the predominance of both communities within the tradition and the importance of textuality in the form of verse and volume, it is difficult to imagine that literacy would have remained limited to an extremely small segment of the community. The importance of liturgical cycles, recitation and performance of *kirtan*, and the possession of a volume containing the Guru's hymns, suggest that access to the writings of the Gurus, and the intelligibility of those writings was afforded to a good percentage of the community. The language of the Gurus was not limited to an elite intelligentsia or priestly preserve, but would have belonged to those individuals and communities who read and/or heard the Gurus' verses. The verses of the Gurus were not meant for the Gurus alone, or for an exclusive community; they were available for any individual to hear in *sangats* spread far and wide. In addition to intelligibility, access to these verses would have been vectored through

prescribed liturgical recitation and the availability of anthologies and manuscripts containing such verses. Scholars have remarked upon the literary transformations occasioned by the rise of manuscript culture and the anthologization of poetry in sectarian and non-sectarian manuscripts beginning in the sixteenth century, but the emergence of this culture would have also had far reaching consequences for increasing literacy across a broad demographic.³⁴

In the Sikh tradition, even the physical production of these anthologies appears to have included the labor of those groups typically considered to be non-literate. For example, sociological evidence indicating the background of seventeenth century scribes in the Sikh tradition includes within its roll a number of Jats.³⁵ The literate role of Jats in the compilation of Sikh literature is also highlighted in the *Puratan Janam Sakhi*. Within the text there are references to a panoply of literate figures who accompanied Guru Nanak during his many travels (*udasi*). Whereas most everyone is familiar with the image of Nanak

³⁴ Charlotte Vaudeville describes the demographic constituent of the Sants as follows, “Socially they belonged to the lower strata of Hindu and Muslim society: nearly all were Shudras, some of them even Atishudras, i.e. Untouchables. They were poor, mostly uneducated or even illiterate; quite a few were women. They had no access or right to Brahmanical knowledge, were not acquainted with Sanskrit and could only express themselves in the local languages of the people, the archaic Indo-Aryan vernaculars of Hindustan and central India.” Charlotte Vaudeville, “*Sant Mat: Santism as the Universal Path to Sanctity*,” in *The Sants: Studies in a Devotional Tradition of India*, ed. Karine Schomer and W. H. McLeod (Berkeley: Berkeley Religious Studies Series, 1987), 21.

³⁵ G.S. Mann, “Scriptures and the Nature of Authority: The Case of Guru Granth in Sikh Tradition” in *Theorizing Scriptures: New Critical Orientations to a Cultural Phenomenon*, ed. Vincent Wimbush (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2008), 51-52.

accompanied by his minstrel friend, Mardana, in his later travels Guru Nanak is also accompanied by Saido and Siho (two Jats of the Gheo tribe), Hasu (a blacksmith), and Siho (a calico-printer). In his travels with Mardana, when Guru Nanak is about to impart a teaching he instructs Mardana to “sound the *rabab*.”³⁶ However, in his later travels the *rabab* is replaced by the *kalam* (pen), and this pen is wielded by figures such as Saido, Hasu, and Siho, all of whom hail from a low caste or untouchable background. References to the writing of these figures is found throughout the *Puratan Janam Sakhi*,

The Guru began to recite. This *var* [ballad] of majh was completed in an exalted state in the land of Dhanashri, written by Saido of the Gheo [zat] .

Then, accepting the name, many became Sikh in the land of Dhanashri.³⁷

This bani was written by Saido of the Gheo zat. Recite Vahiguru.³⁸

This bani was written by Hasu, the blacksmith and Sihai, the calico-printer.³⁹

Though the Gurus were Khatri, it is clear that literacy was not limited to them or to their caste-mates alone. As scribes and companions of the Guru, Jats and low caste individuals played an indispensable role in the recording of the Guru’s verse and the production of manuscripts. Their importance is attested to from the

³⁶ ਮਰਦਾਨਿਆ! ਰਬਾਬੁ ਵਜਾਇ। Bhai Vir Singh, ed. *Puratan Janam Sakhi*, *sakhi* 11, 48.

³⁷ ਗੁਰੂ ਲਗਾ ਜਪਣਿ। ਤਿਤੁ ਮਹਲਿ ਬਿਸਮਾਦਿ ਵਿਚਿ ਧਨਾਸਰੀ ਦੇਸ ਏਹ ਬਾਰੁ ਹੋਈ ਸਾਪੂਰਨ ਮਾਝ ਕੀ, ਤਦਹੁ ਸੈਦੋ ਘੋਰੇ ਲਿਖੀ ਸੰਪੂਰਨੁ। ਤਬ ਧਨਾਸਰੀ ਦੇਸਿ ਬਹੁਤੁ ਨਾਉ ਧਰੀਕ ਸਿਖ ਹੋਏ। ਪੜਣੀ॥ Ibid., *sakhi* 43, 154.

³⁸ ਸਿਬਾਣੀ ਸੈਦੋ ਜਟ ਜਾਤ ਘੋਰੇ ਲਿਖੀ। ਬੋਲੋ ਵਾਹਿਗੁਰੂ॥ Ibid., *sakhi* 46, 162.

³⁹ ਤਤੁ ਬਾਣੀ ਹਸੂ ਲਹਾਰ ਅਤੇ ਸੀਹੈ ਛੀਬੈ ਲਿਖੀ॥ Ibid., *sakhi* 49, 175.

earliest strata of the tradition. The poetry of a Jat named Dhanna is even included in the *bhagat bani* found in the *Guru Granth*.

However, inspite of the aforementioned evidence regarding the literate activities of the Jats and of other low caste communities, for the most part, scholarship has often relied on the depiction of Jats as either “martial” or “rustic.” Given this substratum of literacy amongst the rural, low caste, and/or Jat demographic within the community, it is unlikely that that literacy resided within a small and/or urban segment of the community. As a large percentage of the Sikh community from the time of Guru Nanak onwards, Jats and low caste individuals and communities were deeply involved in the processes of textual production and textual reception. Based on evidence regarding the participation of Jats and low caste demographics in the development of the Sikh scriptural text from the sixteenth century onwards it is difficult to argue that literacy was ever the prerogative of a small elite minority of the Sikh community. For example, in his discussion of the reception of the *rahit* literature in the community during the mid-eighteenth century, W.H. McLeod argues that one’s response to the *rahit* was dependent upon whether one was literate or non literate. Although McLeod does not explicitly claim the non literate segment of the community as Jat and/or rural and the literate segment as Khatri and/or urban, this assumption is revealed in his presentation of how these two communities would have approached the *rahit*.

With regard to the answers sought regarding identity and the promulgation of the *rahit*, he outlines two approaches these groups would have adopted, respectively,

One was an implicit answer which appealed particularly to non-literate Sikhs. Do what your predecessors have done, for they stand in a line that descends directly from the tenth Guru. They are the repositories of the explanations which he communicated to his immediate followers and of the example that he personally displayed. Many believe that it must surely be correct because none standing in the line descending from Guru Gobind Singh's immediate followers would dream of amending the sacred words which they had heard or the ritual actions which they had observed. The other answer appealed to a much smaller number. This answer was communicated in the written word, and it was delivered in the *rahit-namas* or manuals of *Rahit*. Unlike the *Adi Granth* the *rahit-namas* are not sacred scriptures. They are not canonical. The *rahit-namas* would have appealed only to the very small segment of the eighteenth century Sikh population which was literate, through the written word could reach a much wider audience because the literate members of Sikh society were held in some esteem. The illiterate would frequently listen to what they said about their faith and commonly defer to their opinion on such matters. This, after all, was what they were accustomed to doing on a regular basis. Worship for Sikhs meant attending a *dharamsala* and singing the Guru's hymns contained in the canonical scripture or hearing them chanted by a *granthi*.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ W.H. McLeod, *The Sikhs of the Khalsa* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003), 4-5.

Though it is unclear who the “illiterate” are in this quote, it is probably safe to assume that he is referring to the rural demographic within the Sikh community, i.e. Jat and low caste. The reference to the “very small segment” of the eighteenth century Sikh population is the Khatri community in Delhi that refused to obey the *rahit* of the Khalsa.⁴¹ Given that Jats constituted a large percentage of the community since the time of Guru Nanak, if we take into account the critical role played by literate Jats in the development of Sikh literary production, the hard and fast distinction between the rural non literate and urban literate begins to break down. Building upon McLeod’s characterization of the rural illiterate Jat who would not “dream of amending the sacred words which they had heard or the ritual actions which they had observed,” Oberoi presents a similar romanticized view of rural religious life in which “The unlettered peasantry of central Punjab possessed neither the skills nor the inclination to record their religious life.” This reference to the peasantry of the central Punjab (Majha) is not innocuous because it is the region that has historically been the geographical center of the Sikh tradition and most closely associated with the Jats.⁴²

With specific reference to the equation between literacy and non-literacy and the reception of literature within the Sikh community, Surjit Hans makes a distinction between “the great tradition of the reflective few and the little tradition

⁴¹ For more on the disagreement within the Khatri community regarding the Khalsa *rahit*, see Chapter Two.

⁴² Harjot Oberoi, *The Construction of Religious Boundaries*, 140. In other words, urban elites have scripture and rationality while village peasants engage in “popular religion.”

of the largely unreflective many,” and argues that literature within the Sikh tradition can be understood as representing either the “great” tradition or the “little” tradition.⁴³ For example, he claims that the writings of the bhattas and Bhai Gurdas represent the “great” tradition while the *janamsakhi* literature represents the “little tradition.”⁴⁴ Hans’ distinction is premised upon what he considers to be the acceptable presentation of Sikh theology in these literary genres. In his schema, there is no room for the “supernatural excrescences” of the *janam sakhi* literature and, that as a result, “the banishment of miracles in the Great Tradition of Sikhism was amply compensated in the Little Tradition of the janmasakhis.”⁴⁵ However, this distinction between the “great” and “little” traditions in the Sikh tradition is problematic for several reasons.

First and foremost, given the Gurus’ role in consciously developing a corpus of Sikh literature, both canonical and non-canonical, it is unlikely that unrepresentative or inappropriate texts would have been preserved within the community. The selective process whereby the *bhagat bani* was selected is a case in point. Second, the fact that all of this literature was written down suggests that both the “reflective few” and “unreflective many” were bound together by the written word. The romanticized view presented by McLeod, Oberoi, and Hans regarding the simplicity of the peasantry is challenged by the simple fact that

⁴³ Surjit Hans, *A Reconstruction of Sikh History from Sikh Literature*, 178-179.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 189-190.

these “peasants,” i.e. Jats and low caste, were involved in the production of Sikh literature. Because different demographics have been involved in the process of writing as scribes and authors and in the compilation of manuscripts, the equation between author and audience is quite complicated. Were educated Khatris writing the *janamsakhi* literature? And how do we explain that low caste Mirasis such as Balvand and Satta (1540s) and Abdulla and Natha (post 1606) were singing the praises of the Guru along with the Bhattas (1581-1606) who were Brahmins?⁴⁶ This is all to say that the authors of texts representing the “great tradition” may have been authored by those emerging from the demographic of the “unreflective many,” and vice versa. And finally, just because something is popular does not mean it is degenerate. For example, scholarship by Peter Brown and Gregory Schopen on the cult of the saints in early Christianity and monastic Buddhist practice, respectively, has discredited assumptions regarding the divide between “elite” and “popular religion” by showing that elites were deeply involved in the propagation and practice of “popular religion.”⁴⁷ In the Sikh case, the entire community was involved not only in shared religious practice, but in the production and reception of literary texts. Given that normative codes of conduct (*rahit*) have been incumbent upon all Sikhs and that evidence indicates that Sikhs

⁴⁶ Satta and Balvand and Abdulla and Natha were Muslim *mirasis* whose families had most likely converted from their status as low caste or untouchable Hindus.

⁴⁷ See Peter Brown, *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981) and Gregory Schopen, *Bones, Stones, and Buddhist Monks: Collected Papers on the Archaeology, Epigraphy of Monastic Buddhism in India*.

from all backgrounds were involved in different aspects of textual production, it is difficult to sustain an argument regarding a “great” tradition for elite/urban Sikhs and “little” tradition for low-caste/rural Sikhs.

Genre and Guru

In his article, “Sources for the Study of Guru Gobind Singh’s Life and Times,” G.S. Mann schematizes the development of the Sikh literary corpus. He writes, “Early in its history, Sikh literature developed along five lines: (1) the scriptural text, (2) commentaries on this text, (3) statements about practice, (4) life stories of the founder and his successors, (5) and, other historically inflected texts such as court poetry.”⁴⁸ As the canonical center of the Sikh tradition, the boundaries of the *Guru Granth* are well-marked and associated with *all* of the Gurus regardless of whether or not they composed *bani*. In distinction to the closed canon of the *Guru Granth*, Mann describes the remaining four categories as an “open-ended corpus, which was expected to grow as time passed.”⁴⁹ Given the extant manuscript evidence, scholars have been able to pinpoint the historical period during which these texts emerged and trace their development through time. While Mann’s categorization of these four strands as an “open canon” is extremely useful, in this section I would like to shift the focus away from the historical development of these literary genres and instead address the hardened

⁴⁸ G.S. Mann, “Sources for the Study of Guru Gobind Singh’s Life and Times,” 247.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 248. It should be emphasized that the distinction between these four categories of literature is not always clear.

associations that have developed in scholarship regarding the association between literary genre and Guru. In other words, while it is true that the *janam sakhi* literature focuses almost exclusively on the life of Guru Nanak and emerged after his death, scholarly labelling of this literature as hagiographic, rather than historical, has obscured our understanding of Guru Nanak's life and legacy. Similarly, while the bulk of *rahitnama* and *gurbilas* literature addresses the life of Guru Gobind Singh and emerged during his life and within the century after his death, scholarly appraisals of this literature as historical, as opposed to hagiographical, has created a scholarly bifurcation in our understanding of his legacy vis-à-vis Guru Nanak's. Grafting theological assessments onto the chronological emergence of this literature, this approach has created a portrait of the Gurus in Sikh Studies in which the Gurus do not share the same concerns and are portrayed more as metonyms than as full personalities. A deeper examination of the scholarship on these literary genres reveals a portrait of the Gurus in which both Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh are equally concerned with issues of religious identity and community formation and divine and worldly realities.

Aside from the *Guru Granth*, the *janam sakhi* literature is the genre most intimately associated with the life and teachings of Guru Nanak.⁵⁰ Emphasizing the distinction between biography and hagiography, W.H. McLeod defines this

⁵⁰ In addition to *janam sakhi* literature, another source of information on the lives of the Gurus can be found in the composition of bards and singers (*bhatt vahis*).

literature as follows, “A *janam-sakhi* is a collection of hagiographic anecdotes concerning the person of Guru Nanak (AD 1469-1539). These anecdotes, both individually and in their collective form, all serve to express a single myth relating to the life and teachings of Nanak, namely that he was sent into the world by God to demonstrate the way of salvation to an erring and confused mankind. In order to express this myth, the anonymous narrators responsible for the various anecdotes have drawn in some small measure from authentic memories concerning the actual life of Nanak, and in considerable measure from current legend.”⁵¹ Furthermore, W.H. McLeod argues that the historical value of these anecdotal vignettes is very slim.⁵² With regard to the “unsatisfactory” nature of the *janam sakhi* literature as historical source material, McLeod writes, “The problem as far as the *janam-sakhis* are concerned is to determine how much of their material can be accepted as historical. A very substantial proportion of it is legend and much of what cannot be summarily dismissed in this way is open to grave suspicion on other grounds.”⁵³ In other words, because, as McLeod argues, it is impossible to separate the wheat of history from the chaff of hagiography, the depiction of Guru Nanak’s life is to be understood through the lens of myth and metaphor, thus effectively denying him any historical agency or reality. Building

⁵¹ W.H. McLeod, *Early Sikh Tradition*, 12.

⁵² W.H. McLeod *Guru Nanak and the Sikh Religion* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968) and W.H. McLeod, *Textual Sources for the Study of Sikhism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984). For a more formal definition of the *janam sakhi* genre see Surjit Hans, *Reconstruction of Sikh History through Sikh Literature*, p. 198.

⁵³ W.H. McLeod, *Guru Nanak and the Sikh Religion*, p. 8-9.

upon this conception of Guru Nanak in the *janam sakhi* literature Harjot Oberoi writes, “Sikh myth-makers of the seventeenth century had no compulsion to disengage themselves from their universe of symbols in order to generate one single image of Nanak...Guru Nanak’s mythical life is in part fashioned after the universe of seventeenth-century Sikhs. This was a universe free of fixed identities.”⁵⁴

Within Oberoi’s schema, the de-historicization of Guru Nanak is given a further filip by the simple fact that he dates the *janam sakhi* literature to the seventeenth century when in fact the earliest *janam sakhi* text, the *Puratan Janam Sakhi*, can be dated to 1588.⁵⁵ As a result of discussing the text without reference to its proper historical context, its importance as a source for understanding the

⁵⁴ Harjot Oberoi, *The Construction of Religious Boundaries*, p. 56. Oberoi’s reference to a trans-sectarian world connected by myth rather relegates the issue of religious identity to the backburner. In a more nuanced discussion of the relationship between literary strategy and religious identity in medieval north India, Aditya Behl that the different use of shared images suggests “complex and multi-layered levels of South Asian religiosity, in which symbols, words, and images cross religious lines and are deployed in divergent, sometimes directly competing senses.” In the medieval north Indian landscape, sectarian communities shared actual and metaphorical worlds and as a result, Muslims made “conscious and purposeful adaptations” without compromising their sectarian affiliations.⁵⁴ Therefore, just because religious communities used similar tropes, metaphors, images, and epithets for God does not necessarily mean that they shared similar religious identities and loyalties. See Aditya Behl, “The Magic Doe” “The Magic Doe: Desire and Narrative in a Hindavi Sufi Romance, circa 1503” in *India’s Islamic Traditions 711-1750*, ed. Richard M. Eaton (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003), 18.

⁵⁵ For a re-appraisal of the *janam sakhi* literature in general, and the *Puratan Janam Sakhi* in particular, see G.S. Mann, “Stories of the Founder: The *Puratan Janam Sakhi* Re-Visited” Paper presented on November 14, 2009 at the conference, Expanding Horizons: Sikh Studies at the Turn of the 21st Century.

life and times of Guru Nanak is devalued. As an extension of McLeod and Oberoi's categorization of the *janam sakhi* literature, Nikky Guninder Kaur Singh argues in favor of an archetypal and meta-historical approach that will "explore their mythic dimension for its own sake" and "for further insights into our collective human imagination and consciousness."⁵⁶ By arguing for a trans-historical approach to this literature, Singh's approach reduces Guru Nanak and his life to the mere status of allegory and symbol and prevents us from seeing Guru Nanak and the Sikh tradition as a material phenomenon rooted in time, place, and person.

Informing the aforementioned scholarly positions on the *janam sakhi* literature, and its deep and abiding relationship with the life of Guru Nanak, is a conception of Guru Nanak as a paradigmatic Sant, a non-sectarian poet-saint, one amongst many, in medieval north India.⁵⁷ While there is no doubt that Guru Nanak's profile can be incorporated within the "spiritual unity" of *sant* traditions, loosely defined by their shared emphasis on the [divine] name (*nam*), true community (*sangat*), and importance of a spiritual teacher (*satguru*), as the intentional founder of a religious community, Guru Nanak stands apart from

⁵⁶ Nikky Guninder Kaur Singh, "The Myth of the Founder: the Janamsakhis and Sikh Tradition," *History of Religions* 31, no. 4 (1992): 330.

⁵⁷ For a critical assessment of the beatific category of Sant, see Vinay Dharwardkar, *Kabir: The Weaver's Song* (New Delhi: Penguin), 2003.

almost all of his contemporaries.⁵⁸ In an attempt to extricate Guru Nanak from the otherworldliness of devotion, G.S. Mann situates Guru Nanak within the legacy he established during his own lifetime. He writes,

His beliefs surface in the writings of his contemporaries but he stands apart in his emphasis on the unity of the divinity, a life of personal, familial, and social commitment, and the need for collective liberation. Furthermore, he stands alone as someone who translated the beliefs that he sang in his compositions into the actual founding of a community. To provide his followers with a sense of community, Guru Nanak created institutions of central authority, a sacred text, the gurdwara, liturgy, and rudimentary rituals. Within his own lifetime, he raised his most worthy

⁵⁸ While the Sikh Gurus' acknowledgement of the lives and verse of other poet-saints finds clearest expression in the inclusion of the *bhagat bani* in the Sikh scriptural text, it was not always the case that the Sikh Gurus were included in the company of the saints in non-Sikh sources such as the *bhaktamal* literature. As devotional manuals, the *bhaktamal* literature, provided the poet saints of medieval north India with a proper lineage. In the Raghavdas *Bhaktamal* over 730 saints and devotees are mentioned, of whom 445 are 'historical' bhaktas. The Nahata edition of Raghavdas mentions Guru Nanak and his seven successors, including the child Guru, Har Krishan. This indicates that the 1713 date is more likely than the 1660 date. However, the last two Sikh Gurus, Gurus Tegh Bahadur and Gobind Singh, who died in 1675 and 1708, respectively are not mentioned. Raghavdas' *Bhaktamal* is a rare example that strings together the lives of the Sikh Gurus on the same thread of devotion that includes figures such as Ramanand, Ravidas, Kabir, Mira, Dadu, etc. In addition to the description of the Vaisnava *sampradays*, the legacies of Nanak, Kabir, and Dadu are discussed separately. In addition to the Raghavdas *Bhaktamal*, the *Bhaktamal* of Cain (perhaps a disciple of Dadu's disciple Jangopal) includes Nanak. However, in the first large *bhaktamal* written by Nabhadas at the turn of the seventeenth century, none of the Sikh Gurus find any mention. However, this is not necessarily surprising because Nabhadas' text does not mention either Muslim or Nirgun *sants*. In other words, the dominant Vaisnava coloring of the text precludes the inclusion of figures like Guru Nanak who could not be easily linked to the Ramanand. For more on the *bhaktamal* literature see Winand M. Callewaert Winand M. "Bhagatmals and Parcais in Rajasthan" in *According to Tradition: Hagiographical Writing in India*, ed. Winand M. Callewaert and Rupert Snell (Wiesbad: Harrasowitz, 1994), 87-98.

disciple to the status of the Guru and helped the community make the transition to new leadership.⁵⁹

Thus in contrast to the conception of Guru Nanak as a generic Indian religious teacher who taught in an undefined and fluid Indic religious environment, Mann argues that Guru Nanak was a sectarian teacher deeply involved in the establishment of a religious community replete with a series of internal and external markers of identity.

As the oldest *janam sakhi* available, the *Puratan Janam Sakhi* is an invaluable source for understanding the life of Guru Nanak. Completed within fifty years of the Guru's death, it is likely that the author of this text could have collected his stories either from individuals and communities that had actually met the Guru or from his own memory of the Guru.⁶⁰ Far from the dismissal of *janam sakhi* literature as hagiographical and of no historical import, a close examination of the *Puratan Janam Sakhi* provides concrete details regarding Guru Nanak's life and legacy.⁶¹ Beginning with the birth of Guru Nanak to his parents Kalu and Tripta, the portrait of the Guru that emerges from this text is one of a spiritually inclined child and melancholic young adult who over the course of his

⁵⁹ G.S. Mann, *Sikhism*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall Publishers, 2004, p. 28.

⁶⁰ See G.S. Mann, "Stories of Founder: The *Puratan Janam Sakhi* Revisited."

⁶¹ For more on how to read "history" and glean historical information from pre-colonial texts see J.S. Hawley, "Mirabai in Manuscript," in *Three Bhakti Voices: Mirabai, Surdas, and Kabir in Their Times and Ours* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2005), 89-116 and Velcheru Narayana Rao, David Shulman, Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *Textures of Time: Writing History in South India 1600-1800* (New York: Other Press, 2003).

travels, makes a conscious decision to found a community – Kartarpur – on the bank of the Ravi river. In contrast to devotional poets (*bhaktas*) who “sang” places into existence,⁶² Guru Nanak quite literally founded a town and built a place into existence. In addition to the development of Sikh sacred space centered around the *gurdwara* and *takhat*, with the exception of Guru Har Rai and Guru Har Krishan, all of the subsequent Gurus also built cities and undertook architectural works from such as the building of wells (*baulis*) and water tanks (*sarovars*).⁶³ These cities were not remote, but rather built in proximity to trade routes and imperial highways. Participating in the changing socio-economic conditions in the Punjab from the sixteenth century onwards, i.e. growing sedentarization, commercialization of agriculture, monetarization of the economy, the Gurus’ cities were thriving communities that reflected the resources of the *sangat* and of a region that was becoming more integrated into the Mughal empire.⁶⁴

⁶² A.K. Ramanujan, *Hymns for the Drowning*, 107.

⁶³ In their essay entitled, “Brick by Sacred Brick: Architectural Projects associated with Guru Arjan and Guru Hargobind,” Gurmeet Rai and Kavita Singh draw attention to the cities established by Guru Arjan and architectural projects such as the Akal Takhat and Lohgarh, the “first Sikh fort,” built by Guru Hargobind after his father’s execution. In reference to Hargobindpur (district Gurdaspur) they note that the spatial arrangement “has its roots in the organization of military encampments.” Gurmeet Rai and Kavita Singh, “Brick by Sacred Brick: Architectural Projects associated with Guru Arjan and Guru Hargobind” in *New Insights Into Sikh Art*, ed. Kavita Singh (Mumbai: MARG Publications, 2003), 44.

⁶⁴ See Chetan Singh, *Region and Empire: Panjab in the Seventeenth Century* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1991).

Whereas Oberoi creates an image of Guru Nanak the *janam sakhi* literature in which he is “always transforming and wandering,” quite to the contrary, the importance of Kartarpur and the Punjab as his home, despite his many travels, is continually emphasized in the *Puratan*.⁶⁵ In this text the meetings between Guru Nanak and various religious figures and kings, the end result is always similar – those individuals become his Sikhs after either accepting the name (*nau dharik hona*) or undergoing initiation (*charanamrit*). When some of his companions are asked along the course of their travels who they are, they respond that they are “Guru Nanak’s Sikhs.”⁶⁶ Far from a world free of fixed identity, the *Puratan* paints a portrait of the Guru in which his disciples are known as Sikhs and are initiated into the community either by Guru Nanak or his companions. From the text, it appears that the lines of authority are clear enough for the Guru to depute his companions to administer *pahul*. A panoply of characters receive his teachings ranging from religious teachers to political leaders, Hindus to Muslims, and both men and women. Referred to as a “worldly holy man” (*duniyadari fakir*), the *Puratan* actually places a great emphasis on his worldly life in both his biological family and the spiritual family of his Sikhs.

⁶⁵ Harjot Oberoi, *The Construction of Religious Boundaries*, 55.

⁶⁶ ਸੀਹੋ ਬੋਲਿਆ: ‘ਜੇ ਅਸੀਂ ਗੁਰੂ ਨਾਨਾਕ ਕੇ ਸਿਖ ਹਾਂ’। Bhai Vir Singh, ed., *The Puratan Janam Sakhi*, sakhi 42, 150. In manuscripts of the *Puratan*, however, this phrasing reads differently. Instead of the reading “We are Guru Nanak’s Sikhs,” the phrasing is, “We are with Guru Nanak,” (ਅਸੀਂ ਗੁਰੂ ਨਾਨਾਕ ਕੇ ਸਾਥ ਹਾਂ।)

Given the importance of the *sangat*, the questions remains regarding who would have constituted the early community at Kartarpur and in other *sangats*. Limited evidence from this period suggests that Guru Nanak's followers were drawn from four backgrounds: the Muslims; the low-caste people from the Hindu social hierarchy; the Khatri; and lastly, the Jats and other rural groups who lived in the immediate vicinity of Kartarpur.”⁶⁷ While many attribute the changes to the influx of Jats in the Sikh community to the early seventeenth century, evidence suggests that the Jats have been a significant component of the community since the time of Guru Nanak. The first reference to Jats emerges in the seventh century writings of Hsuen Tsang who remarks upon an unnamed large pastoral population in Sindh defined by their egalitarian structure and “hasty disposition.”⁶⁸ In the eighth century text the *Chachanama*, this community is referred to as the Jats and by the eleventh century evidence indicates that they had migrated in large numbers from Sind into the Punjab. With the introduction of the Persian wheel into the region, this community experienced the transformation from pastoralism to sedentary agriculture, and by the end of the sixteenth century, they are mentioned in Abul Fazl's *Ain-e-Akbari* for their presence in the Lahore and Multan *subas* (province). From references spanning the seventh to sixteenth century, a picture emerges of a community that over time had risen in status from

⁶⁷ G.S. Mann, *Sikhism*, 23.

⁶⁸ Irfan Habib, “Jatts of Punjab and Sind” in *Punjab Past and Present: Essays in Honour of Dr. Ganda Singh*, ed. Harbans Singh and N. Gerald Barrier (Patiala: Punjabi University, 1976), 92-103.

shudra to zamindar and transformed from pastoralist to farmer. Though a large number of Jats also converted to Islam,⁶⁹ a significant portion were attracted to the teachings of Guru Nanak. Whether they were drawn to the egalitarian message of Guru Nanak, the emphasis on self-sustenance and agriculture at Kartarpur, the promise of a respectable status within the community, or any other factors, the basic fact remains that they have always been a sizeable and important demographic in the Sikh tradition.⁷⁰

Disregarding the evidence that places Jats as a sizeable segment of the Sikh *panth* from the time of Guru Nanak onwards, H.W. McLeod and other scholars argue that due to the external forces of Mughal persecution and the influx of Jats into the Sikh *panth* after the execution of Guru Arjan in 1606, the tradition underwent a “radical change” during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. As a result of these changes, a disjuncture occurred between the first and final Gurus, respectively.

During the course of the Guru period the nature and policy of the Panth underwent a radical change. The early Gurus had been religious teachers

⁶⁹ Richard M. Eaton, “The Political and Religious Authority at the Shrine of Baba Farid” in *India’s Islamic Traditions 711-1750*, ed. Richard M. Eaton (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003), 263-284.

⁷⁰ While many scholars have focused on the Khatri background of the Gurus, recent research by G.S. Mann indicates that at the time of appointing his successor, in addition to Lehina (Guru Angad), two Jats – Baba Buddha and Randhawa – were also considered for succession. If in fact, this is true it further strengthens the argument that Jats have been important in the community from the time of Guru Nanak onwards. Personal communication with G.S. Mann.

preaching the message of the divine Name and attracting little or no attention from the Mughal authorities of the time. Guru Arjan, however, died in their custody and his son Guru Hargobind adopted a more militant posture. This new policy receded after Hargobind's death in 1644, but it revived as a result of the execution of Guru Tegh Bahadur in 1675 and reached a climax under Guru Gobind Singh. In 1699 it was given institutional form in the Khalsa order and has remained a powerful impulse within the Panth ever since.⁷¹

Informed by a beatific image of Guru Nanak whose historical legacy is less important than his hagiographical persona, McLeod's argument suggests that changing political equations and social demographics brought "radical" changes to both the material practices and literary sources within the tradition. With regards to changes in literary genres, McLeod argues that the *janam sakhi* literature so closely associated with the mystical interiority of Guru Nanak was replaced by an aggressive exteriority in the depictions of Guru Hargobind and Guru Gobind Singh in the *gurbilas* literature.⁷² In this reading then, the "radical changes" in the *panth* were of such a nature that the lives of the Gurus could no

⁷¹ W.H. McLeod, *Textual Sources for the Study of Sikhism*, 11. See also Harjot Oberoi, *The Construction of Religious Boundaries*, 58. For more on the establishment of the Khalsa by Guru Gobind Singh see Chapter Two.

⁷² Interestingly, however, McLeod is suspicious of either genre to provide "historical" information. He writes, "Like the *janam-sakhi*, the *gur-bilas*, literature is far more important as a testimony to the beliefs of writers and their contemporary circumstances than to the actual lives of the Gurus." W.H. McLeod, *Textual Sources for the Study of Sikhism*, 11. For more on the complicated relationship between history and hagiography see John Stratton Hawley, "Mirabai in Manuscript."

longer be contained within the *janam sakhi* model, hence the emergence of the *gurbilas* genre.⁷³ Thus, the diverging missions of Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh, respectively, necessitated different genres.

The exteriority of the *gurbilas* literature is further supplemented by the emergence of a normative set of behavioral codes in the *rahitnama* literature that defined the Sikhs as an exclusive religious identity. McLeod draws parallels between historical developments in the *panth* and the emergence of literary forms in the following statement,

As the form and dominant philosophy of the Panth changed so too did its religious perceptions and the literature which gave them expression. The *janam-sakhis* continued to retain a considerable measure of their earlier popularity, but during the eighteenth and early nineteenth century a new approach to the lives of the Gurus appeared. This was the *gur-bilas* or ‘splendor of the Guru’ style, a treatment which exalted the courage of the Gurus and lauded their skill in battle. Inevitably its exponents concentrated their attentions on the two great warrior Gurus, on Guru Hargobind and pre-eminently on Guru Gobind Singh.⁷⁴

While it is true that the eighteenth century witnesses the emergence of a new literary genre known as the *gurbilas*, it is not the case that these accounts of the lives of Guru Hargobind and Guru Gobind Singh, respectively, represent a “new

⁷³ With the exception of the one *gurbilas* text written about Guru Hargobind’s life, the lives of Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh have received the greatest treatment in Sikh sources.

⁷⁴ W.H. McLeod, *Textual Sources for the Study of Sikhism*, 11.

approach” to representing the lives of the Gurus.⁷⁵ In the late eighteenth century several *gurbilas* texts emerge that focus on the life of Guru Gobind Singh. In this chapter we are focusing on literature produced during the Guru period (c. 1500-1708), and although the accounts of Guru Gobind Singh’s life do not identify themselves as “*gurbilas*” texts, they are certainly literary predecessors to later *gurbilas* accounts.

The four contemporary accounts of Guru Gobind Singh’s life that emerge by 1708/1709 – the *Apani Katha*, *Sri Gursobha*, *Das GurKatha*, and *Parchi Patshahi Dasvin* – do devote a great deal of their focus to the courage of Guru Gobind Singh and his skill in battle, in line with McLeod’s description of the *gurbilas* literature. However, in stark contrast to McLeod’s argument regarding the “radical changes” that affected the philosophy of the *panth*, a close reading of these accounts of Guru Gobind Singh’s life and mission reveals that the concerns of the first and final Guru were in fact quite similar. In other words, the concerns of the “hagiographic” Guru, Guru Nanak, as expressed in the *janam sakhi* literature and the “heroic” Guru, Guru Gobind Singh, as expressed in the “*gurbilas*” literature are the same. While it is true that new elements are introduced in the accounts of Guru Gobind Singh’s life – greater emphasis on

⁷⁵ Technically speaking, the first *gurbilas* entitled, *Gurbilas Patshahi Chevin*, “Gurbilas of the Sixth Sovereign [Guru Hargobind],” is attributed to the poet Sohan and, within the text itself it refers to its date of composition as 1718. See Fauja Singh, “The Date of Writing of Gurbilas Patshahi VI” in *Punjab Past and Present*, ed (Patiala: Punjabi University, 1971), 62-66.

battle, meetings with historically verifiable actors, etc. – by and large, these accounts focus more on the elements that connect Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh – the authority and lineage of the Ten Gurus, the importance of the divine name and *sangat*, and the liberation that can only be experienced at the feet of the true Guru. Far from representing a “radical change,” Guru Gobind Singh’s Khalsa is the *sangat* of earlier times, and like Guru Nanak, Guru Gobind Singh is concerned with the well-being of his community in this world and their liberation in the next. Thus whether it be in the *janam sakhi* or “*gurbilas*” literature produced during the Guru period, the Guru is the central focus of attention. Situated against the historical changes faced by the *panth* during the Guru period, the one constant is the centrality of the Guru, and in all of the literature produced during this period, they are understood to share the same light.

Building upon the argument that the changes of Guru Gobind Singh’s tenure were reflected in the *gurbilas* literature, many scholars argue that the *rahitnama* literature reflected the exclusivist concerns of the Guru and that it developed in the eighteenth century as the Khalsa identity became the normative identity in the community. W.H. McLeod argues that the emergence of the *rahitname* literature lies at the heart of Khalsa identity, an identity that stands in opposition to other forms of Sikh identity.⁷⁶ According to W.H. McLeod, the

⁷⁶ Comparing the *rahitname* literature to the *Dharmasutra* literature, Harjot Oberoi argues that the Khalsa created its own exclusive *dharma* that supplied normative rules for

rahitname literature was not firmly articulated until the mid-eighteenth century, although a “proto-rahit” literature can be extracted from earlier Sikh sources. However, for a tradition in which the issue of identity has been of central concern from the time of Guru Nanak onwards, there is no such thing as “proto-rahit,” there is only *rahit*. The articulation of proper behavioral conduct is found in the earliest layers of the tradition. Arguing for the historical antecedents of *rahit*, G.S. Mann writes, “Given the emphasis on *shubh amal* (“good deeds”), it is logical that statements about practice (*rahit*) developed alongside the interpretation of Sikh beliefs.”

With regards to the historical development of the *rahitname* literature, McLeod divides its development into two phases, “The first occurred during the struggles against Muslim power in the early and middle years of the eighteenth century; and the second came with the endeavors of the Tat Khalsa segment of the Singh Sabha reform movement in the late nineteenth and early twentieth

maintaining a distinctive Sikh identity. He writes, “In the last decade of the seventeenth century, in the month of Baisakh, the last Sikh guru, Gobind Singh, instituted the Khalsa order. Given the paucity of written records it is hard to specify why the Khalsa order was established and it is even harder to specify the exact nature under Gobind Singh. But one thing is clear: the Khalsa was instituted to finally end the ambiguities of Sikh religiosity. The Sikhs would henceforth, at least normatively, be able to distinguish between ‘us’ and ‘the others’. These distinctions were inscribed through a complex cultural repertoire made up of inventive rituals, codes of conduct, mythical narratives, and a whole new classificatory code regarding the body.” Harjot Oberoi, *Construction of Religious Boundaries*, 59.

centuries.”⁷⁷ However, manuscript evidence does not bear out his claim. Often held up as a paradigmatic *rahit* text, McLeod dates the *Chaupa Singh Rahitnama* to the mid-eighteenth century when in fact manuscript evidence provides a completion date of 1700. That is to say, the manuscript evidence for the *rahit* literature is contemporaneous with the lifetime of Guru Gobind Singh and not fifty or one hundred years later.⁷⁸ For a tradition that is less than five hundred years old, the re-dating of these texts has a profound ramification for how we understand the progression of the tradition from sources *within* the tradition itself.

⁷⁷ W.H. McLeod, *Sikhs of the Khalsa*, p. 6. This dating has been accepted by almost every scholar in the field of Sikh Studies. Jeevan Deol states that, “Although most of the extent *rahitnamas* present themselves as having been written during the lifetime of Guru Gobind Singh, these claims seem somewhat difficult to accept. Indeed, some of the texts appear to be of late eighteenth or nineteenth century productions.” Jeevan Deol, “Eighteenth Century Khalsa Identity: Discourse, Praxis, and Narrative,” in *Sikh Religion, Culture, and Ethnicity*, ed. Christopher Shackle, Gurharpal Singh, and Arvind Mandair (London: Curzon, 2001), 35. Oberoi writes, “it is possible to conclude that by the second half of eighteenth century a distinctive Khalsa normative order emerged.” Harjot Oberoi, *The Construction of Religious Boundaries*, 69. And in her article “History in the Sikh Past,” Anne Murphy states that the “earliest example” of the *rahit* literature can be traced to the mid-eighteenth century. Anne Murphy, “History in the Sikh Past,” *History and Theory* 46 (2007), 359.

⁷⁸ With regards to the importance of the *Chaupa Singh Rahitnama*, G.S. Mann writes, “First it offers a detailed statement on personal and communal obligations that Sikhs were expected to follow. Secondly, by evoking the authority of the “Granth Ji” or “Granth Sahib” consistently, it establishes the source that one needs to tap to find answers to questions about practice. For the authors, “the word of the Granth Sahib Ji should be considered the Guru.” Thirdly, the drafting of the document emphasizes the centrality of communal consensus in this process. Finally, the document defines *rahit* as an open-ended concept within the Sikh community, which has full authorization to resolve any practice-related issue based on the teachings enshrined in the Granth.” G.S. Mann, “Sources for the Study of Guru Gobind Singh’s Life and Times,” 250. For a thorough disclaimer regarding the manuscript evidence see *Ibid.*, 275.

One point that emerges from a cursory examination of the association of these literary genres – the *janam sakhi*, *rahitnama*, and *gurbilas* – with two Gurus in particular, Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh, is that inspite of the genre in question, the authority of the Guru and his mission do not change. As bearers of revelation, they are fundamentally concerned with the establishment of *dharam* in this world. Sharing the same light, these Gurus consciously bestow an identity on their disciples and actively engage in creating and maintaining their community (*sangat*). Unlike scholarship that argues that the *janam sakhi* literature reflects an inclusive non-sectarian identity in contrast to the exclusive sectarian identity presented in the *gurbilas* and *rahitnama* literature, the discussion of these genres in this chapter has tried to argue that these three genres share the same concerns regarding identity, community, and an understanding of the Guru.

In the next chapter, we turn our attention to Sainapati's *Sri Gursobha*, a text that incorporates the concerns of the *janam sakhi*, *rahitnama*, and *gurbilas* literatures. As the first contemporary biography of Guru Gobind Singh's life, this text is of fundamental importance for understanding the life of Guru Gobind Singh and the contours of the Sikh community in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.

Chapter Two: Sainapati's *Sri Gursobha*

Apart from the life of Guru Nanak, there is perhaps no moment in Sikh history upon which more scholarly ink has been spilled than the founding of the Khalsa by Guru Gobind Singh in the late seventeenth century. While many scholars employ the language of “rupture” and “contradiction” to explain this development, there is no evidence in contemporary sources to suggest such an interpretation. In fact, in all of the sources of the period, the seamless authority of the Gurus is emphasized and the Khalsa is seen as an all encompassing institution established by the Guru in order to combat both internal and external enemies. Every contemporary source of the period refers to the internal dissension represented by the five forbidden groups (*panj mel*) and the external threats posed by Rajput treachery and Mughal tyranny that threatens the authority of the Guru, and by extension, the integrity of the Sikh community. Sainapati's *Sri Gursobha* presents Guru Gobind Singh's life and mission not in opposition to the lives and teachings of the previous nine Gurus, but rather, as a fulfillment and realization of their legacy. This chapter will examine the text of *Sri Gursobha* with regards to its author, date, and compilation and situate it within the context of the literary production and material practices at the Anandpur court.

Darbari Ratan Sainapati

Enumerated as one of the fifty-two court poets (*darbari ratan*) present in the court of Guru Gobind Singh, Sainapati is credited with translating Kautilya's *Arthashastra* into Punjabi and with composing the *Sri Gursobha*.⁷⁹ Although there is no reference to Sainapati's name within the text of the *Sri Gursobha* itself, later sources attribute to him its authorship. In the *Guru Ratanmal*, Sainapati's name is mentioned in the context of presenting a text to Guru Gobind Singh for correction.⁸⁰ Originally from Lahore, Sainapati's given name was Chandar Sain and he belonged to the Mann caste (*got*). He was sent to the Anandpur court by his teacher Devi Das Chandan (*vidya guru*), and over time his name changed to Sri Saina Sukh and finally to Sainapati. Some scholars have raised questions regarding his religious affiliation at the Guru's court due to the absence of the "Singh" from his name, and have concluded, that he must not have been a member of the Khalsa. Although seemingly insignificant, this issue of nomenclature highlights a tension in scholarly estimations of the purpose and

⁷⁹ The term *darbari ratan* is not found within Sikh sources, but is a term coined by Piara Singh Padam. While it does not accommodate all of the poets writing about Guru Gobind Singh, it does have a heuristic value and I will retain it in my discussion. See Piara Singh Padam, *Sri Guru Gobind Singh Ji de Darbari Ratan* (Patiala: Kalam Mandir, 1976).

⁸⁰ The reference reads – ਸੈਨਾਪਤਿ ਕਵਿਤਾ ਕਰੇ ਗੁਰਦਰਸਨ ਤੇ ਪਾਰ। ਕਰੇ ਭਲੀ ਵ ਬੁਰੀ ਨਿਤ ਸਤਿਗੁਰੂ ਲਏ ਸਵਾਰ। / "Sainapati offered his poetry for the Guru's *darshan*, the Satiguru attended to its every detail, good and bad." As we have no cause to doubt the authenticity of this reference, it raises the intriguing possibility that the Guru himself would have corrected Sainapati's text and may have done the same with other texts composed at Anandpur. The *Guru Ratanmal* claims a composition date of 1734.

scope of Khalsa identity in Sikh history. With regards to Sainapati's name, W.H. McLeod writes,

The fact that he seemed not to bear the name Singh (which suggests that he was not himself a member of the Khalsa) is, according to Ganda Singh, explained by the fact that in the first section (dhiau) he writes of *khalsa bach*, the 'conversation of the Khalsa'. This suggests according to Ganda Singh, that 'Khalsa' was his nick-name (GSobh 17). The explanation is unconvincing. Sainapati may be called Saina Singh by some Sikhs, but the fact that he was not known by the designated Khalsa name leaves the impression that he was not a member.⁸¹

According to McLeod, Khalsa identity is premised upon an exclusive relationship between the Singhs and the Khalsa, as opposed to the Sikhs and the Khalsa, and as a result, membership is only accorded to those who bore all of the external markings of Khalsa identity. While this position will be challenged throughout this dissertation through an examination of contemporary texts produced during the lifetime of Guru Gobind Singh, in the immediate context of Sainapati's name,

⁸¹ W.H. McLeod, *Sikhs of the Khalsa: A History of the Khalsa Rahit*, 60. This out of hand dismissal of "traditional" scholarship is echoed in similar reasoning extended to the authorship of the *Vachitar Natak* by McLeod as he writes, "One can certainly make a very strong case for the claim that Vichitar Natak is the work of an individual and there is no convincing reason to doubt that the author is Guru Gobind Singh himself." (108). Scholarly claims are not made on "conviction" but rather evidence, and in both his estimation of Sainapati's "nick-name" and the authorship of the *Vachitar Natak*, McLeod's reliance on "traditional" evidence is inconsistent. See W.H. McLeod, "The Sikh Scriptures: Some Issues" in *Sikh Studies: Comparative Perspectives on a Changing Tradition*, ed. Mark Juergensmeyer and N. Gerald Barrier (Graduate Theological Union: Berkeley, 1979), 97-112.

this argument is disingenuous for several reasons.⁸² First, in the *Benati Chaupai*, a composition dated to 1698 in the *Anandpuri Birh*, authorship is simply attributed to a generic anonymous poet, *kabiyovach*, “the utterance of the poet.” Given the precedent of using a generic epithet such as *kabiyovach*, it is likely that Sainapati chose to give himself a more specific and identifiable moniker by referring to himself as *khalsabach*, “poet of the Khalsa.” Second, according to Sainapati’s text, the Khalsa was an inclusive community defined first and foremost by loyalty to the Guru. In other words, everyone would have been bound by their loyalty to the Guru, but not everyone would have performed the same function either in the community at Anandpur or at near or distant *sangats*.⁸³ Guru Gobind Singh would not have been able to create a thriving community at Anandpur if he only had warriors running the affairs of state; there would have also been bookkeepers, accountants, scribes, blacksmiths, artisans, agriculturists, etc involved in maintaining the economic and political viability of the Anandpur. Third, the Sikh tradition records an anecdote regarding a poet named Nand Lal at the court of Guru Gobind Singh donning a sword during the second siege of Anandpur in 1704 only to be told by the Guru that instead of wearing a sword, he should arm

⁸² Even if one wanted to argue that the Khalsa identity was based on military identity, the martial connotation of his name – “Leader of the Army” – can function as evidence of his belonging.

⁸³ For the varied requests of Guru Gobind Singh to the *sangats* see Ganda Singh, ed. *Hukumname: Guru Sahiban, Mata Sahiban, Banda Singh Ate Khalsa Ji De* (Patiala: Punjabi University, 1967).

himself with his appropriate weapon (*shashtar*), the pen.⁸⁴ Similarly, as a poet, Sainapati was tasked with the responsibility of writing about Sikh *dharam*, suggesting that in this case the pen was at least as mighty as the sword. And finally, if we accept the reference in the *Guru Ratanmal* that Guru Gobind Singh corrected Sainapati's text, given the proximity of their relationship it is hard to imagine that the the absence of "Singh" or his moniker of *khalsabach* would have been escaped the Guru's attention.

Unlike the agreement of scholars regarding the authorship of Sainapati, there is less agreement regarding the dating of his *Sri Gursobha*. In the opening chapter of the *Sri Gursobha*, Sainapati provides both the title and starting date of his composition,

Upon consideration, I have given this volume the name *Gursobha*,
From listening and reciting, one achieves liberation by fixing you in the
heart. |5|

The year 1700 and [5]8 has passed,⁸⁵

During Bhado *sudi* 15, I created this story with affection. |6|⁸⁶

⁸⁴ ਗੁਰੂ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਪਾਸ ਕਮਾਲ ਦੀ ਦੈਵੀ ਸੂਝ ਸੀ। ਆਪ ਨੇ ਕਵੀਆਂ ਨੂੰ ਇਹ ਦ੍ਰਿੜ ਕਰਵਾ ਦਿਤਾ ਕਿ ਆਪ ਦਾ ਧਰਮ ਕੇਵਲ ਲਿਖਣਾ ਹੈ। ਜਦੋਂ ਆਮਦਪੁਰ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਨੂੰ ਮੁਗਲਾਂ ਨੇ ਘੇਰਨ ਦਾ ਇਰਾਦਾ ਕੀਤਾ ਤਾਂ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਨੇ ਸਾਰੇ ਸਿੰਘਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਸ਼ਾਸਤ੍ਰਧਾਰੀ ਹੋਕੇ ਦੀਦਾਰ ਕਰਨ ਲਈ ਹੁਕਮ ਭੇਜੇ। ਕਹਿੰਦੇ ਹਨ ਭਾਈ ਨੰਦ ਲਾਲ ਜੀ ਵੀ ਤਲਵਾਰ ਪਹਿਨਕੇ ਹਜ਼ੂਰ ਪਾਸ ਗਏ। ਸਤਿਗੁਰੂ ਨੇ ਭਾਈ ਜੀ ਦੇ ਸ਼ਾਸਤ੍ਰ ਆਪ ਲਾਹੇ ਤੇ ਹੱਥ ਵਿਚ ਕਲਮ ਫਵਾਉਂਦਿਆ ਹੁਕਮ ਕੀਤਾ 'ਇਹੀ ਆਪ ਦਾ ਸ਼ਸਤ੍ਰ ਹੈ। ਇਸ ਨੂੰ ਦਿਨ ਰਾਤ ਵਾਹੋ'। ਇਉਂ ਕਲਮ ਵਾਲੇ ਕਲਮ ਚਲਾਉਂਦੇ ਰਹੇ ਤੇ ਸ਼ਸਤ੍ਰ ਚਲਾਉਣ ਵਾਲੇ ਮੌਤ ਦੇ ਗਾਨੇ ਬੰਨ੍ਹੀ ਜੰਗਾ ਯੁਧਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਤੇਗ ਚਲਾਉਂਦੇ ਰਹੇ। See Gurmukh Singh, ed., *Sanchep Das GurKatha Krit Kavi Kankan* (Chandigarh: Raghbir Rachna Prakashan, 1991).

⁸⁵ Sammat 1758/1701 CE.

Disregarding the invocation date provided in the text itself, a scholarly consensus has developed around 1711 CE as the date of composition. However, the scholarly calculus that went into that computation is not convincing. The argument informing the scholarly consensus of 1711 is explained by W.H. McLeod as follows,

There has been much controversy concerning the date of the *Gur Sobha*, but opinion seems once again to be hardening in favour of 1711. The exact date of the text has been difficult to fix and three dates have been advanced. These are 1701, 1711, and 1741. The first of these can be easily eliminated as *Gur Sobha*, includes events which belong to the last years of Guru Gobind Singh 's life which ended in 1708. The 1741 date proved, however, to be a little more difficult to dislodge. Akali Kaur Singh had argued in 1927 that *athavan* (fifty-eight) should really be read as *athanav* (ninety-eight), which would make the date of the text S. 1798 or 1741 CE. Ganda Singh responded by pointing out that none of the important events of the years separating 1711 and 1742 received even the hint of mention and that 1741 could therefore be definitely eliminated. This left 1711 as the only acceptable year. For some years his reasoning was accepted, but recently the controversy has been reopened on the grounds that no definite text exists. This, however, did not disprove Ganda Singh's argument concerning the silence of *Gur Sobha* on events between 1711 and 1741, and once again opinion has swung back to 1711. There seems to be little reason for maintaining 1741 as the approved date.⁸⁷

⁸⁶ Appendix B, Chapter One.

⁸⁷ W.H. McLeod, *Sikhs of the Khalsa: A History of the Khalsa Rahit*, 59-60. For more see the Introduction in Ganda Singh, ed. *Kavi Sainapati Racit Sri Gur Sobha* (Patiala: Publications Bureau Punjabi University, 1988 [1967]).

Recently, however, G.S. Mann has challenged the claim of 1711 by arguing for a composition period that begins in 1701 and ends shortly after the death of Guru Gobind Singh at Nanderh in 1708. Because there is no evidence for the date of 1711 in the extant manuscripts, Mann argues that “The appearance of the date 1701 within the invocation of *Sri Gur Sobha* needs to be taken into serious consideration. Its presence at the opening of the text could imply that the poet began writing it in 1701 and continued to work on the text until late in 1708.”⁸⁸ Mann’s arguments regarding the dating of this text are compelling, especially given his examination of evidence drawn from the extant manuscripts. The silence of Sainapati on developments post-1708 – the rise of Banda Singh Bahadur and the establishment of Mukhlispur – is also suggestive that 1711 is too late of a date given the chronological sequence of Sainapati’s account. Given the fact that Banda was tasked with the responsibility of corralling the followers of the Guru in the Punjab, who were waiting for the Guru’s return, it is difficult to imagine that Sainapati, who prophesizes a triumphant return to Anandgarh, would have omitted these events.⁸⁹

⁸⁸ G.S. Mann, “Sources for the Study of Guru Gobind Singh’s Life and Times,” 252.

⁸⁹ See Ami P. Shah, “Return to Anandgarh: Sainapati and the Sovereign Destiny of the *Panth*,” in *Guru Gobind Singh: New Sources, New Voices*, ed. Gurinder Singh Mann (forthcoming).

With regard to the absence of Banda in Sainapati’s account, Indubhushan Banerjee writes, “The Guru’s stay at Nander thus amounted to about three weeks and Saina Pat

While the difference between 1701 and 1711 may seem like a small discrepancy compared with the larger historical arc of the tradition, that decade witnessed the single most profound change in the Sikh tradition since the time of its founding by Guru Nanak in the early sixteenth century. With the death of Guru Gobind Singh in 1708, the line of living Gurus came to an end, and for the first time in over two hundred years, the person and office of the Guru was discontinued. In 1707, Aurangzeb, the last of the great Mughal emperors, died and this development provided fuel to the politically uncertain nature of sustained rebellion and revolt amongst demographic communities ranging from urban to rural and elite to peasant in northern India, especially Punjab, and the onslaughts of Nadir Shah and Ahmed Shah Durrani in the mid eighteenth century.⁹⁰ Dispersed throughout the plains and hills of the Punjab, the Sikhs were not able to consolidate their command of the region until 1765 when they captured Lahore. As a result of this unstable period lasting a half of a century, for the most part, the

gives us a fair idea as to how the days were passed by the Guru. But it appears to us very significant that he does not say anything about Banda or his conversion to Sikhism.” Indubhushan Banerjee, *Evolution of the Khalsa Volume Two*, p. 152.

⁹⁰ Irfan Habib has argued that the Sikh and Jat peasant uprisings of the early eighteenth century were due to the worsening conditions of the peasantry under Mughal rule, while Muzaffar Alam has focused primarily on the role of elite intermediaries, such as zamindars, in those uprisings. Though the Sikh uprising in the early decades of the eighteenth century was a serious challenge, it was by no means the only instance of rebellion. There was a “simultaneity of unrest” during this period that transcended the Sikh cause, thus leading to a general period of instability in the region. See Irfan Habib, *Agrarian System of Mughal India 1556-1707* (New York: Asia Publishing House, 1963), Muzaffar Alam, *The Crisis of Empire in Mughal North India: Awadh and the Punjab, 1707-1748* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1986), Chetan Singh, *Region and Empire: Panjab in the Seventeenth Century*.

large scale literary production of texts ceased without the anchoring presence of the Guru, patronage, and the court. As demonstrated in Chapter One, the ability to date with relative precision the emergence of written documents in the Sikh tradition has allowed scholars to more understand its historical trajectory by situating texts in their proper historical parameters of production. Given the unstable environment of the first half of the eighteenth century in the Punjab, it is unlikely that Sainapati would have been writing in either 1711 or 1741. Those in favor of the 1711 date argue that Sainapati's *Sri Gursobha* reflects an understanding of the Guru and his court as a recent historical memory rather than as a living institution.⁹¹ However, when the *Sri Gursobha* is examined in light of manuscript evidence, the invocation date it itself provides, and the substance of its narrative, it becomes evident that Sainapati was writing within the contemporary presence of the Guru and the living institution of the his court.

Anandpur and the Guru's Darbar

Founded by Guru Tegh Bahadur in 1664 under the name Makhawal/Chak Nanaki, Anandpur was the name given to the town by Guru Gobind Singh after his victory at Bhangani (1688). In the opening chapters of the the *Sri Gursobha*,

⁹¹ In her article, "History in the Sikh Past," Anne Murphy uses the 1711 date to argue that Sainapati is writing about Sikh history, that is, a history that has already passed. Disregarding the 1701 invocation date that exists in the text, she argues that Sainapati was writing in 1711 when a "particular rationale for history was produced within Sikh religious thought and intellectual production around the discursive construction of the community in relation to the past and as a continuing presence." 345. See Anne Murphy, "History in the Sikh Past."

Sainapati refers to the beautiful place, Makhawal, established by Guru Gobind Singh and then describes the Guru's move to Paunta and his subsequent return to Anandpur.

The beautiful site of Makhawal was the place the Satiguru inhabited.
There he passed his time in various miraculous sports. 7|48|
Many years passed in this way,
Satiguru went to the territory of Paunta.
Building a palace on the edge of the Yamuna,
Everyone was greatly pleased. 8|49|⁹²

After the Guru's success against the hill chiefs in the Battle of Bhangani,

Sainapati recounts the Guru's establishment of Anandpur,⁹³

Victorious in battle, Prabhu arrived in Paunta, and prepared to leave with
his army,
Packing everything, all were ready to leave,
Arriving in Kahlur you established Anandpur and took rest,
The brave were rewarded and the cowards turned out. 49|90|
Many days and years were spent at that place,
The victorious ones were protected and the evil ones killed. 50|91|⁹⁴

⁹² Appendix B, Chapter Two.

⁹³ After the battle of Bhangani, in the *Apani Katha* the return to Anandpur is described as follows: ਜੁੱਧ ਜੀਤ ਆਏ ਜਬੈ ਟਿਕੈ ਨ ਤਿਨ ਪੁਰ ਪਾਵੈ। ਕਹਲੂਰ ਮੈ ਬਾਧਿਯੋ ਆਨਿ ਅਨੰਦ ਪੁਰ ਗਾਵੈ। 36। ਜੇ ਜੇ ਨਰ ਤੱਹ ਨਾ ਭਿਰੇ ਦੀਨੇ ਨਗਰ ਨਿਕਾਰ। ਜੇ ਤਿਹ ਠਉਰ ਭਲੇ ਤਿਨੈ ਕਰੀ ਪ੍ਰਤਿਪਾਰ। 37। ਬਹੁਤ ਦਿਵਾਸ ਇਹ ਭਾਂਤਿ ਬਿਤਾਏ। ਸੰਤ ਉਬਾਰਿ ਦੁਸਟ ਸਭ ਘਾਏ। ਟਾਂਗ ਟਾਂਗ ਕਰਿ ਹਨੇ ਨਿਦਾਨਾ। ਕੂਕਰ ਜਿਮਿ ਤਿਨ ਤਜੇ ਪ੍ਰਾਨਾ। 38॥ When we returned having won the battle, those who deserted us could find no place. Within Kahlur, I established the village of Anandpur. Those individuals who did not fight in the battle were removed from the city. Those who took place in the fighting were extended protection. Many days passed there. The good people were uplifted and the evil ones destroyed. Yielding, they were defeated. Like a dog, they lost their life.

Anandpur was the the Guru's patrimony and the geographical context of his *darbar*, but as the home of the Guru, it was also a transformative place sanctified by the his presence,

Gobind Singh's auspicious place is Anandpur,
[There] the *sangat* transformed through *darshan*, experienced the treasure
of the name. 1|298|⁹⁵

Sainapati makes ample reference to Anandpur throughout the first half of the *Sri Gursobha*. However, after a description of the Battles of Nirmoh and Kalmot in Chapter Ten, Sainapati refers to the building of Anandgarh, "the fortress of bliss." He writes,

The Khalsa of Satiguru grew in strength,
Coming to Bisali, Satiguru Puran Purakh. 25|403|
You are the cause of creation and destruction,
Then he built Anandgarh and extended his rule. 26|404|⁹⁶

From this point in the *Sri Gursobha* onwards, Sainapati refers to Anandpur as Anandgarh. This *shift* however is not simply semantic, but was deeply informed by significant changes in the material circumstances and resources of the Guru during this time period. The importance of Anandgarh as a triumphant testimony to the Guru's growing power is stressed in Sainapati's account,

Once again, they inhabited Anandgarh, the Rajas accepted his authority,
Marching from Bisali, Prabhu returned to this territory. 1|405|

⁹⁴ Appendix B, Chapter Two.

⁹⁵ Appendix B, Chapter Eight.

⁹⁶ Appendix B, Chapter Ten.

Having a daily *darshan*, the Khalsa is eternally happy,
 Performing *seva* to Satiguru with love in their heart. 2|406|
 The Khalsa came to that place from cities far and wide,
 Seeing Prabhu Purakh, no delusion remained. 3|407|
 The nearby villagers were all under the control of the Khalsa,
 Over two years were spent in this way. 4|408|⁹⁷

After the early success of the Guru in battle against the Rajput hill chiefs, his stature and power in the region grew. After the battle of Bhangani, the building of five forts commenced: Fatehgarh, Holgarh, Lohgarh, Anandgarh, and Keshgarh. Forming a strategic perimeter around Anandpur, these forts were architectural testaments to the growing strength of the Guru and his community (*panth*). According to G.S. Mann, “*Anandgarh* was the largest, having a well with stairs (*bauli*) within its precincts, and thick walls with provisions for guns to be fitted in.”⁹⁸ By 1701, the Guru had shifted his residential quarters to Anandgarh and he would have been there until the final evacuation of Anandpur in 1704. While Anandgarh would have functioned as the Guru’s residential quarters, as the site of his court, Keshgarh have been witness not only to a remarkable literary efflorescence but an impressive display of material resources and wealth as well.

⁹⁷ Appendix B, Chapter Eleven.

⁹⁸ G.S. Mann, “Sources for the Study of Guru Gobind Singh’s Life and Times,” 233. Writing in the late nineteenth century, Bhagat Lakshman Singh highlights the importance of Anandgarh in a similar manner. He writes, “In the year 1688-89 A.D. four fortresses, Anand Garh, Loh Garh, and Kesh Garh were built in the vicinity of Anandpur. Of these Anandgarh proved most serviceable during the siege of Anandpur by the Imperial army.” Bhagat Lakshman Singh, *A Short Sketch of the Life and Work of Guru Gobind Singh* (Patiala: Language Department, 1970 [1883]), 75.

In regards to the material elements of Guru Gobind Singh's court, Gurinder Singh Mann writes,

The texts offer descriptions of how he [Guru Gobind Singh] sat on the throne (*takhat*), accompanied by his personal attendant (*hazuri tahilia*) waving the ceremonial flywhisk (*chauri*), and by the chamberlains (*ardasia*) who announced the visitors, as well as by scholars (*muktas*), poets (*kavi*), scribes (*likharis*), musicians (*dhadhis/rababis*), drummers (*nagarchis*), and flag-bearers (*jhanda bardar*)."⁹⁹

Accounts of the wealth and status of Guru Gobind Singh's court have also found reference in non-Sikh Persian sources such as Muhammad Qasim's *Ibratnama* (1723). According to Qasim,

He [Guru Tegh Bahadur] had a son called Guru Gobind. After his father's death, the crown of chiefship was put on his head. More people came to serve him than his father or grandfather. This young man, in comparison with his precursors, had more abundant resources for comfort and material entertainment. the magnificence of his state grew to such extent that he was not behind the nobles of 5,000 [zat] or even rulers of principalities in anything concerned with greatness of splendour or accumulations of resources. Thus in this way he spent his time in the mountainous country in the proximity of the *chakla* Sarhind in luxury and pleasure, joy and delight. After some time, the inclination to serve him on the part of all kinds of people exceeded every limit and there was no month or year when the roads were not filled by caravans of people carrying offerings to him.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁹ G.S. Mann, "Sources for the Study of Guru Gobind Singh's Life and Times," 259

¹⁰⁰ Grewal, J.S. and Irfan Habib, ed. *Sikh History from Persian Sources*, 113.

In contrast to this description of the Guru's growing material resources and political stature amongst his contemporaries, scholars have continued to question the form and content of the Guru's court. In his recent publication, *The Darbar of the Sikh Gurus: The Court of God in the World of Men*, Louis Fenech traces the development of the court of the Gurus over time and from the outset questions whether references to the Sikh court are to be understood in figurative or literal terms. He writes, "Although the Gurus probably held court (that is, presided over receptions or gatherings of Sikhs), it is far more difficult to ascertain whether or not they possessed a formal court with designated attendants, advisors, newswriters, agents, canopy-bearers, and so on, who were regularly in attendance and formed a hierarchy bound together by a precise etiquette."¹⁰¹ Juxtaposing the development of the Sikh court under Guru Gobind Singh against the Persianite framework of the Mughal state, Fenech argues both that the Sikh court "embraced the very 'grammar' of the Mughal court, its rituals, symbols, and ceremonies to convey power and authority as would be understood in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries," and that they adapted that grammar to "reflect their particular situations and fulfill their own unique and multiple

¹⁰¹ Louis E. Fenech, *The Darbar of the Sikh Gurus: the Court of God in the World of Men* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2008), 11-12. Fenech notes that the contours of the Sikh court changed throughout time, but his skepticism regarding its literal presence is reinforced throughout his work with phrases such as "circumstantial references" to the Sikh court, "allusions to the court and courtly items," and the term *darbar* as a "metaphorical reference."

interests.”¹⁰² According to Fenech’s argument, although the tenth Guru possessed a court, “albeit a limited one,” what ultimately differentiated the Guru’s court from the Mughal Emperor’s was not its material size and scope but its spiritual basis. Reading the court through a spiritual rather than material, i.e. political, lens, Fenech underscores the difference between the two courts as follows, “At the centre of the Sikh court was the one true spiritual king of the universe, an emperor who was not so concerned with impressing his courtiers ‘the magnitude of imperial prestige and authority’ the principal object behind Mughal courtly etiquette but rather the magnificence of the Divine.”¹⁰³

One of the limitations of such an understanding is that it views the concerns of Guru Gobind Singh as fundamentally spiritual and, by extension, in opposition to the political. In addition, it reinscribes a conception of the tradition as somehow unchanging and religious; viewed as a palimpsest, the deepest layer, the “core” of the tradition is spiritual in nature with the consequence that the political, or even the modern, is somehow external to some imputed essence. As discussed in Chapter One, this approach informs scholarly estimations of the lives and teachings of the Gurus leading to an overdrawn periodization of Sikh history and an erratic estimation of both literary and material sources within the tradition.

¹⁰² Ibid., 10. It is unproductive to compare the material resources of the Mughal Empire with those of the Gurus. The issue is not one of strict equivalence but of proportionality.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 23. For an account of the changing contours of the Mughal court from Babur to Akbar see Ruby Lal, *Domesticity and Power in the Early Mughal World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

If the court is seen as merely symbolic or essentially spiritual, then all of its actions appear somewhat superficial or hollow.¹⁰⁴ If, as Fenech argues, the primary purpose of the Guru's *darbar* was to, "translate into flesh, blood, and indeed sound the divine court of which we regularly hear in the primary Sikh sacred text [*Guru Granth*], an attempt to emulate on earth the divine court which radiating outwards through its performances or kirtan allowed all those present to participate in the play of the divine,"¹⁰⁵ then we are left in the awkward position of having to explain the material body of evidence that was present at the Anandpur court. Given "the layers of security around Anandpur, the presence of the standing army, the weaponry, the elephants, the horses, the flags, the seal, the official stationary, the issuing of the *hukumname*, the copper plates" Fenech's position that the Guru's *darbar* reflected the concerns of a "spiritual king" needs modification.¹⁰⁶

The Guru's residence was in the center of Anandpur, and it is possible to imagine a situation in which the Guru's residential quarters and court were fully integrated into the life of the city. In other words, the Guru was not a remote figure sitting at a distance from the community, but rather was physically integrated into the activities of both the court and city. Far from a conception of the Guru as solely spiritual leader, the court of Guru Gobind Singh would have

¹⁰⁴ See Daud Ali, *Courtly Culture and Political Life in Early Medieval India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), Introduction.

¹⁰⁵ Louis E. Fenech, *The Darbar of Sikh Gurus*, 162.

¹⁰⁶ G.S. Mann, "Sources for the Study of Guru Gobind Singh's Life and Times," 246.

been the mis-en-scene against which the affairs of the state and community unfolded. Within this context, then, how can we understand the sovereignty of the Sikh community at Anandpur? In his article, “Eighteenth Century Khalsa Identity: Discourse, Praxis, and Narrative,” Jeevan Deol highlights the slogan in the *Sri Gursobha* regarding the “imperative to win political sovereignty” over Anandpur, but he fails to envision sovereignty outside the realm of *dharam*. Within his schema, the recapture of Anandpur is only important insofar as it furthers the Guru’s participation in a religious war (*dharam yuddh*) designed to re-establish *dharam*. Dyed in the trans-temporal hues of *dharam*, the *Sri Gursobha* is read with an eye towards future aspirations instead of present capabilities. Expanding upon Deol’s argument, Anne Murphy argues that “the meaning of sovereignty [at Anandpur] as political is not always clear (and is certainly not fundamentally territorialized or statist).”¹⁰⁷ However, a revised understanding of the role of the

¹⁰⁷ Anne Murphy, “History in the Sikh Past,” 358-359. This is a problematic argument for several reasons. First, in trying to articulate a Sikh historical sense that transcends the “narrowness of both the modern European and Khalistani conceptions of history,” (365) she does not give proper due to the literary and material expressions of sovereignty found at Anandpur. She does not even take note of the shift in terminology between Anandpur and Anandgarh. Given that the political markers of sovereignty were present at the Anandpur court, Murphy’s argument is difficult to sustain. Second, she argues that the focus on Anandpur is misplaced because communities in places like Delhi are also a central concern. Here she is referring to an episode in Chapters Five through Seven regarding disagreement between Sikhs in Delhi regarding the new Khalsa *rahit*. What she fails to incorporate into her argument is that the episode is concluded by the Delhi Sikhs coming to Anandpur and recognizing the authority of the Guru. Building upon Murphy’s argument, Purnima Dhavan suggests that territorial sovereignty is only emphasized in later Persian histories such as Bakhtmal’s *Khalsanama* (1807) and Khushwaqt Rai’s *Tarikh-i-Sikhan*. See Purnima Dhavan, “Redemptive Pasts, Imperiled Futures: The Writing of a Sikh History,” *Sikh Formations* 3, 2 (December 2007): 111-124.

Anandpur yields evidence that the Guru's activities were coterminous with the activities of the state. It is not tenable to argue that sovereignty during Guru Gobind Singh's period was equivalent to the concept of state formation based on the experiences of the modern European nation-state. However, if we reconceptualize the state as existing "in the specific activities and ideas of the individual men who composed it rather than any self-evident functional structure," then it is possible to argue that the activities of the court were the "activities of the state."¹⁰⁸

As the Guru to the Sikh community, the religious role played by the Guru is indisputable. In addition to that position, however, the Guru also stood at the center of a vast network of relationships spanning scribes and poets, a professional army and mercenary soldiers, accountants and bookkeepers, family members and retainers, and political enemies and allies.¹⁰⁹ He was not simply a symbol of authority in Anandpur, but a multipotent source of both political and religious authority. If we neglect to fully take stock of the material evidence from Anandpur, then we are left with depoliticized and decontextualized items that represent nothing more than a mimicry of Mughal forms and/or a set of non-ideological artifacts that represent the "cultural" heritage of the Sikh tradition.

¹⁰⁸ Daud Ali, *Courtly Culture and Political Life in Early Medieval India*, 6-7.

¹⁰⁹ In Chapter Nine in the preparations for the Battle of Nirmoh, Sainapati makes a reference to the employment opportunities present at the Guru's *darbar*. He describes the arrival of members of the *sangat* who were put on the payroll and outfitted with weapons. See Appendix B, Chapter Nine, verses 14-15.

Furthermore, without situating literary sources within the material contexts of courtly patronage it is difficult to explain how or why such a vast corpus of literature was produced at Anandpur. For example, rather than situate anthologies such as the *Dasam Granth* and *Sarabloh Granth* as examples of court poetry, scholars have uncritically attributed to them the status of scripture without examining the textual history of these texts or the courtly context of their production.¹¹⁰

This misreading of texts is compounded by the misdating of texts which has led to a profound disconnection between text and context. Stemming from a deep skepticism of colophon dating in manuscripts and a basic lack of manuscript research, scholars in Sikh studies have pushed back the dating of all texts despite evidence to the contrary. This skepticism seems to be fueled by a disbelief that the Sikh tradition has developed in a self conscious manner throughout time. This scholarly astonishment at the capabilities of the tradition is evident in the

¹¹⁰ In describing the cultural efflorescence of the Lahore Kingdom of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, B.N. Goswamy suggests that the vast literary and material production and activities were “marked by a catholicity of approach, a decidedly liberality of outlook.”¹¹⁰ B.N. Goswamy, *Piety and Splendour: Sikh Heritage in Art*, 9. If scholarship can accommodate the catholicity of patronage at Maharaja Ranjit Singh’s court and the court of Patiala, Kapurthala, Nabha and Jind, why is it so difficult to extend that rubric to Guru Gobind Singh’s court? Is it because Guru Gobind Singh is seen as a religious leader as opposed to “political” leaders such as Ranjit Singh, Narinder Singh, etc.? For more on the “problematic” contents of the *Dasam Granth* and its relationship to Sikh religious identity see Jeevan Deol, “Eighteenth Century Khalsa Identity: Discourse, Praxis, and Narrative,” and Robin Rineheart, “Strategies for Interpreting the Dasam Granth” in *Sikhism and History*, ed. Pashaura Singh and N. Gerald Barrier (Delhi: OUP, 2004):134-150.

persistent and widespread use of terms such as *nascent* and *inchoate* to describe the Sikh community under Guru Gobind Singh's tenure.¹¹¹ Whether describing the importance of "loyalty to the Guru and the nascent Panth" as described in compositions from the *Dasam Granth*, or the rest required by the "nascent Khalsa" as they made their way through the Lakhi Jungle in late 1705, scholars such as Louis Fenech seem unable to accept the community as well formed and coherent by the time of the tenth Guru.¹¹² Along a similar vein, Anne Murphy argues that the *rahit* literature attempted to specify Sikh behavior and the "nascent community."¹¹³ Within this economy of words then it appears that the Sikh tradition was in a state of nascency up until the mid-eighteenth century, over two hundred years after the establishment of Kartarpur by Guru Nanak! This of course begs the question, at what point does a religious tradition finally become a tradition? The establishment of the Khalsa by Guru Gobind Singh was not a beginning, but rather a continuation, of a distinct *panth* founded by Guru Nanak.

The Khalsa of Guru Gobind Singh

Unlike scholarly descriptions of the "nascent" state of the Sikh *panth*, in the *Sri Gursobha*, Sainapati presents a coherent narrative of a community with a

¹¹¹ For a discussion of McLeod's description of an inchoate concept of authority within Guru Gobind Singh's period see Chapter Three.

¹¹² Louis E. Fenech, *The Darbar of the Sikh Gurus*, 14 & 278. Fenech even extends this terminology back to the fourth Guru, Guru Ramdas when he comments that "we cannot know for certain how the fourth Guru conducted the nascent Panth's affairs." Ibid., 62. It appears then, according to Fenech, that the *panth* has always been nascent.

¹¹³ Anne Murphy, "History in the Sikh Past," 359.

distinctive religious and political identity structured around the Guru. In other words, far from creating *ex-nihilo*, Guru Gobind Singh's tenure seen as a culmination of Guru Nanak and the lives and legacies of all of the previous Gurus. In the first chapter, Sainapati describes the mission entrusted to Guru Gobind Singh to establish *dharam*. According to Sainapati, all of the Gurus share one light and one mission,

You are Guru Nanak, you are Guru Angad,
You are Guru Amardas and Ramdas.
You are Guru Arjan, you are Guru Hargobind,
You are Guru Har Rai, and Har Krishan are you.
In the Kaliyug the ninth sovereign manifested the divine,
Tegh Bahadur himself, protecting the entire world.
You are the tenth sovereign, Guru Gobind Singh,
You are Prabhu who has come to liberate the world 5|46|¹¹⁴

For Sainapati, there is no question that Guru Gobind Singh is the inheritor of a tradition embodied in the illustrious lineage of the previous Gurus. At different points in the text, Sainapati highlights the heritage of the Gurus in the plural; that is, Guru Gobind Singh is not singular and separate from the other Gurus, but representative of them. In addition to the centrality of the Guru, Sainapati highlights the importance of the *sangat* (true community) throughout his text. This unity of the Guru(s) and the *sangat* is subsequently reflected in Guru Gobind Singh's elevation of the Khalsa.

¹¹⁴ See Appendix B, Chapter Two.

In her article, “Redemptive Pasts and Imperiled Futures,” Purnima Dhavan argues that *gurbilas* texts such as *Sri Gursobha* depict the creation of the Khalsa as a “moment of rupture in Sikh practices,” and that, as a result, these texts must address the emergence of this “new warrior community.”¹¹⁵ In a similar vein, Jeevan Deol also argues that, “the Sikhs of the period saw its [the Khalsa] creation as an innovation which created a rupture both with earlier Sikh tradition and with the ritual universe of maximal lineages (*biradari*) in which most Sikhs seem to have participated.”¹¹⁶ Further arguing that the Khalsa represented a separation from the *Nanak panth* (community of Nanak), Deol implicitly suggests that there is an irreconcilable divide between the teachings of Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh.¹¹⁷ This view is easy to understand given the dominant scholarly characterization of Guru Nanak as a non-sectarian *sant* propagating a teaching based on the importance of the [divine] name, guru, and *sangat*. As discussed in the previous chapter, the binary classification of Guru Nanak as *sant* and Guru Gobind Singh as warrior has thoroughly permeated scholarly reconstructions of the Sikh tradition. The continued association of the hagiographical *janam sakhi* with Guru Nanak and the historical *gurbilas* with

¹¹⁵ Purnima Dhavan, “Redemptive Pasts and Imperiled Futures,” 114.

¹¹⁶ Jeevan Deol, “Eighteenth Century Khalsa Identity: Discourse, Praxis, and Narrative,” 26.

¹¹⁷ While scholars continue to use the term *Nanak panth/i* to describe the Sikh community, it is important to state that that term is not used within Sikh sources. The term first appears in the seventeenth century *Mihriban Janam Sakhi* authored by a non-Sikh writer.

Guru Gobind Singh has further reified the seeming differences between the two Gurus. The language of rupture used by scholars such as Dhavan and Deol is reflective of such characterizations. However, in contrast to these characterizations, a close reading of Sainapati's account of the founding of the Khalsa reveals that the scholarly language of rupture to describe this event is unjustifiable.

Describing the scene of its establishment of the Khalsa in Chapter Five, Sainapati describes the unfolding of events at Anandpur as follows,

Now I will tell you about Guru Gobind Singh's city, Anandpur,
Surrounded by mountains and situated on the bank of the Satluj.1|117|
The month of Chet¹¹⁸ passed and there was a great fair,
While giving *darshan* at the time of Vaisakhi, Satiguru reflected. 2|118|
The *sangat* came for *darshan* from cities far and wide,
The compassionate one provided [them] with a generous *darshan*.3|119|
Gobind Singh made the *sangat* joyous and blessed them,
Then the Khalsa was revealed and all entanglements were resolved. 4|120|
The entire *sangat* gathered on the bank of the Satluj,
Listening to this many became Khalsa, and many were irresolute. 5|121|
Discard the *masands* and recognize only the one, this wisdom was
declared,
The Guru and the Sikhs are united as fish with water.6|122|
This is the true *sangat*, this is genuine wisdom,
Without good fortune this state can not be achieved in the world.7|123|
Discipline, duty, worship, have one name -- Gobind,

¹¹⁸ March-April.

Once it is recited, one experiences an unparalleled experience of bliss.^{8|124|}¹¹⁹

As one of the earliest, if not earliest, accounts of the founding of the Khalsa, Sainapati's version is bereft of the dramatic elements common to later accounts such as the gifting of a double edged sword by the goddess, the Guru's demand for the sacrifice of five heads, and the obligation of the *panc kakkar*.¹²⁰ In comparison to the highly elaborate descriptions found in later accounts, Sainapati's description involves the simple declaration that the entire community is the Khalsa and that they should abide by several specific injunctions. First, the Guru orders the *sangat* to abandon the *masands* who are supposed to represent the Guru in communities far and wide. Having usurped power in their own name, the Guru rejects the intercessionary role of the *masands* and establishes his sole authority over the *sangat*. Now known as the Khalsa, the community would be loyal only to the Guru. Derived from the Arabic, Khalsa is an adjective that denotes "the pure," and an administrative term that specifies lands whose revenue is directly given to the emperor. Operating within the semantic and administrative range of this term, Guru Gobind Singh establishes a peerless community whose loyalty is solely directed to the Guru. Concomitant with the emphasis placed on loyalty, the Guru calls on his Sikhs to direct their material resources to the Guru at

¹¹⁹ See Appendix B, Chapter Five.

¹²⁰ The *panc kakkar* are the five items, that begin with the letter "k," which members of the Khalsa are supposed to wear: *kes*h (unshorn hair), *kang*a (comb), *kard*a (steel bracelet), *kirpan* (dagger), and *kac*cha (breeches).

Anandpur. He calls on his Sikhs to offer revenue and tribute directly to him without the aid of any intercessor,

Prayer, *golak*, and *dasvandh*,
Keep them in the house, discard the *masands*.
Any offering for Satiguru,
Offer that in his presence. 25|141|¹²¹

In addition, to abandoning the *masands* and the offering of revenue, the Guru also furnishes the community with the following injunctions.

When Satiguru the creator made this declaration,
From beginning to end, the entire *sangat* is my Khalsa.
He who heeds the *hukam*, will be my true Sikh,
He who doesn't heed the *hukam* will be bereft.
Abandon the evil company¹²² of the five, cherish the *sangat*,
Renounce all greed, become firm in compassion and *dharam*.
Neither smoke the *hukka* nor shave the head and beard.
Those are the Khalsa of the Vahiguru's Guru. 30|146|¹²³

Falling under the *hukam* (command) of the Guru, every Sikh is urged to renounce all forms of authority other than the Guru. In contrast to the virtue of the *sangat*, the Guru warns his Sikhs to stay away from the *kusangat* (evil company) of the five forbidden groups (*panj mel*). Although Sainapati does not list the specific

¹²¹ See Appendix B, Chapter Five. This emphasis on keeping donations in the home (*golak*) is mentioned in the various *hukumname* of Guru Gobind Singh. See Ganda Singh, ed., *Hukumname: Guru Sahiban, Mata Sahiban, Banda Singh Ate Khalse Ji Te*.

¹²² “*kusangat*.”

¹²³ Appendix B, Chapter Five.

five groups, they would have been comprised of the *Minas*, a group that disputed the succession of Guru Arjan and placed authority in Pirthi Chand, the elder son of Guru Ramdas; the *masands*, deputies who represented the Guru in Sikh communities; those who performed *bhaddar*, the ritual shaving of the head; the *Dhirmalias*, a group led by Dhirmal, the grandson of Guru Hargobind who did not accept the authority of his brother, Guru Hari Rai; and, finally, those who practiced *kurdimar*, the killing of a female child in preference for a male child. Apart from the mention of the *panj mel*, during the initiation itself there is no reference to any other exclusions based on age, gender, profession, etc. Initiation into the Khalsa is provided by the double edged sword (*khanda*), which is administered by the Guru himself,

He administered the *khanda di pahul*, Prabhu the creator.

He established the Khalsa in the ten directions, nothing was comparable to it. 33|149|¹²⁴

In direct contrast to Dhavan's argument that texts like the *Sri Gursobha* depict the emergence of a "warrior community," Sainapati actually presents an inclusive vision in which the entire *sangat* is the Khalsa; apart from the mention of the double edged sword in the initiation ceremony there is no special mention of the role played by any weapons or warriors in the establishment of the Khalsa. In

¹²⁴ Appendix B, Chapter Five. Unlike mid to late eighteenth century accounts of the founding of the Khalsa that include the "sweetening" hand of Mata Jito, there is no reference to such an event in the *Sri Gursobha*.

fact, throughout the three chapters in *Sri Gursobha* that discuss the founding of the Khalsa, the term Singh is not even used. Though there are many references to the Singhs of the Guru in the *Sri Gursobha*, they are not singled out as more representative of the Khalsa than any other individual or group in the community. In Sainapati's text the Khalsa comprises Singh, Sikh, and Sikhni, and there is no allowance for labels such as Khalsa Sikh or Khalsa Singh; the entire community is the Khalsa. Sainapati continually refers to the Sikhs of the Khalsa. Dhavan's assertion that the Khalsa was a new warrior community echoes an assertion made by W.H. McLeod in his early work on the Sikh tradition. McLeod argues that,

God, for Guru Gobind Singh, was personified by steel and worshipped in the form of the sword. For him the characteristic name of God was *sarab-loh*, the 'All-Steel', and it is no accident that in the preparation for Sikh baptism the baptismal water is stirred with a two-edged sword.¹²⁵

In this quote, McLeod is actually referring to an epithet for God, "Sarab Loh," that finds greatest reference in the *Sarab Loh Granth* (1698), an anthology of court poetry produced at Anandpur. Just as there is no worship of weapons in the *Sri Gursobha*, there is not even one occurrence of the epithet "Sarab Loh," in the text.¹²⁶

In addition to influencing scholars of the Sikh tradition, McLeod's presentation of the Guru as a worshipper of weapons has also informed arguments

¹²⁵ W.H. McLeod, *The Evolution of the Sikh Community* (New Delhi: OUP, 1999 [1975]), 13.

¹²⁶ For a full list of epithets used in the *Sri Gursobha* see Appendix A.

put forth by David Lorenzen and William Pinch regarding the “warrior ascetics” of the Khalsa and the equivalence between the soldiering identities of Khalsa, Rajput, and Maratha. Arguing that the Khalsa should be understood as a militaristic religious group for whom “military organization and aims are their central characteristic,” David Lorenzen situates the emergence of Khalsa identity as a phase of armed asceticism in the seventeenth century that included groups such as the Dasanami *nagas* and Vaisnava *bairagis*.¹²⁷ In his book *Warrior Ascetics and Indian Empire*, William Pinch builds upon McLeod and Lorenzen’s argument and writes that “To be a soldiering *gosain* [ascetic] was to be dependent on the sword only – akin to Sikh and Maratha identity in the early eighteenth century, or Afghan and Rajput identity in the sixteenth century. The *khalsa* Sikh commitment to the symbol of the sword as a core component of community identity from 1699 onward is suggestive in this regard.”¹²⁸

These representations of the Khalsa as a warrior community organized around the centrality of the sword are problematic for many reasons. First, as discussed earlier, in Sainapati’s account the Khalsa is an identity that includes the entire *sangat*. Nowhere is the Guru’s intention to create an inclusive identity more clear than his disavowal of caste identity exemplified by the strict prohibition on

¹²⁷ David Lorenzen, “Warrior Ascetics in Indian History” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 98 (1978), 63. Lorenzen’s understanding of the Khalsa is based again on an understanding of the transformation of the “pacifistic sect founded by Nanak” into the “militaristic Khalsa brotherhood initiated by Govind Singh” as a rupture. *Ibid.*, 71.

¹²⁸ William Pinch, *Warrior Ascetics and Indian Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 121-122.

the performance of *bhaddar*. Thus far from creating a military caste, the Khalsa is an institution that is anti-caste altogether. Second, Khalsa identity is not dependent on soldiering or participation (*naukari*) in the larger Indian military labor market. While scholars such as Dirk Kolff have referred to the “manpower factor” that created a labor market for armed peasants from the Delhi Sultanate to the British Empire, Khalsa identity was not simply another expression of military entrepreneurship.¹²⁹ While the *Sri Gursobha* does mention presence of professional and mercenary soldiers at Anandpur and in the conduct of various battles, it is clear that they are not to be equated with the Singhs.¹³⁰ In other words, the professional and mercenary soldiers who fought in the Guru’s army were not necessarily synonymous with the Khalsa. For those Sikhs who fought for the Guru as the Khalsa, they were bound by a religious identity that superceded any professional contract. Hence unlike terms such as Afghan, Rajput, and Maratha that increasingly invoked elite military identities from the sixteenth century onwards, the Khalsa was not an identity reserved for an elite class or caste

¹²⁹ This is not to say that Sikh soldiers did not participate in the larger Indian labor market, but that if they did so, they did not do so as Khalsa Sikhs. See Dirk Kolff *Naukar, Rajput, and Sepoy: The Ethnohistory of the Military Labour Market in Hindustan 1450-1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

¹³⁰ While scholars such as Louis Fenech express surprise at the request for *hukkas* (smoking pipes) in the *hukamnamas* of Guru Gobind Singh given the Sikh injunction to avoid the *hukka*, these requests can be understood if we allow for the presence of Muslim mercenary soldiers at Anandpur. See Louis E. Fenech, *The Darbar of the Sikh Gurus*, 142. Sainapati notes the treachery of mercenary soldiers such as Najabat Khan, Bhikhan Khan, and Hayat Khan who desert the Guru during the Battle of Bhangani (1688).

of warriors within the Sikh community.¹³¹ And finally, whereas contemporary Maratha and Rajput aspirations were largely accommodated within the *mansabdari* framework of the Mughal empire, there is no comparable evidence that Guru Gobind Singh was seeking a place within that system.¹³² Specifically, many comparisons have been made between the religious and political struggle of Guru Gobind Singh and Shivaji, but for our purposes, it is important to underscore that despite his various rebellions, Shivaji worked within the Adil Shahi and Mughal empires and that the Guru, despite his communication with Aurangzeb and Bahadur Shah, did not display any interest of being accommodated within that system.¹³³

Far from a presentation of the Khalsa as the formation of a new warrior community, in the *Sri Gursobha* the Khalsa is the name of the entire community bound in their loyalty to the one true Guru, Guru Gobind Singh. In this sense, the

¹³¹ Stewart Gordon's argument that the origin of terms such as Rajput and Maratha and the development of their martial ideology through service to the Mughal Empire is difficult to apply to the emergence of the Khalsa. See Stewart Gordon *The Marathas 1600-1818* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

¹³² The *mansabdari* system developed under Akbar (r. 1555-1605) and created an imperial hierarchy for the collection of revenue and the mobilization of military forces. For more on Shivaji's status within the *mansabdari* system see Stewart Gordon, *The Marathas 1600-1818*, and for a discussion of the *mansabdari* system as the "apparatus of empire," see M. Athar Ali, *The Apparatus of Empire: Award of Ranks, Offices, and Titles to the Mughal Nobility 1574-1658* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985).

¹³³ For more on the shifting alliances of Shivaji see Stewart Gordon, *The Marathas 1600-1818*. Also, unlike the Khalsa, the Marathas did not disassociate themselves from the authority of the Mughal Emperor and even minted coins in his name. This is in direct contrast to the Sikh minting of coins, evidence of which we have at Anandpur. See G.S. Mann, "Sources for the Study of Guru Gobind Singh's Life and Times."

Khalsa is not simply a metaphor for liberation, but a reference to the actual community within which liberation occurs,

He is a fool who doesn't go to the true *sangat* and seeks knowledge from another,

Those who not scared of the true *sangat*, their minds are filled with pride,

He who doesn't meet the true *sangat*, has squandered his life,

He who doesn't heed the master's *hukam*, the one who has shown the path,

Those who are deceitful, they are incapable of understanding the Khalsa.

58|174|¹³⁴

Gobind , be merciful, give me the boon of the name,

They are fortunate in this age who recite the name,

All afflictions are removed and blemishes disappear from the body,

That body becomes pure, which is immersed in your love,

That person who destroys pride, [will] find shelter with the virtuous.63|179|¹³⁵

Forgetting the Khalsa, yet desiring to be liberated,

Know that that will never occur.

Just as a fish will die without water,

One who does not follow the word of the Guru is a fool.

Just as bow without a string will not release an arrow,

Look in your heart and recognize that knowledge.

A life in violation of the *rahit*, is like a fool,

¹³⁴ See Appendix B, Chapter Five.

¹³⁵ See Appendix B, Chapter Five.

Who hearing of the Guru's teaching does not follow them.52|249|¹³⁶

In his account of the Khalsa, Sainapati continually emphasizes that the Guru alone can bestow liberation upon the entire community. Liberation is achieved through meditation on the name and loyalty to the Guru. And while Sainapati refers to the liberation of soldiers fighting for the Guru on the battlefield, they are not freed not by the blade of their sword but by the Guru's grace. Thus, while scholars have highlighted the role of *tegh* (the sword) in the establishment of the Khalsa, they have failed to situate the importance of *tegh* within a vision that included *deg* (the cauldron) and *fateh* (victory).¹³⁷ The slogan of *deg, tegh, fateh*, which was on seals from this period, highlights a Sikh worldview in which the charity of the cauldron is as essential as the power of the sword for justice and victory.¹³⁸ The inter-dependence of the religious and political, expressed in the formulations of *din-duniya* and *miri-piri*, has provided a foundation for the Sikh tradition since the time of Guru Nanak. The Khalsa is a complex nexus of relationships and responsibilities that stresses proper living in this world in order to ensure liberation in the next.

¹³⁶ See Appendix B, Chapter Six.

¹³⁷ For more on arguments related to the cult of the sword in the Khalsa narrative see Chapter Three.

¹³⁸ The inscription on coins from the period read: *Degh o Tegh o Fateh o Nusrat Bedirang, Yافت az, Nanak Guru Gobind Singh*, "Cauldron, Sword, and Victory, Received by Guru Gobind Singh from Nanak."

Resistance and Resolution to the Rahit

Although the Guru articulated a vision of the entire community as the Khalsa, it is not surprising that there were some elements within the community that resisted this declaration. Following the establishment of the community as the Khalsa, Sainapati details the faultlines that emerged in the Delhi community of Khatri Sikhs. This detail is important to note because in current scholarly portrayals the assumption is that the disagreement between the Jats and Khatri when evidence in Sainapati's account highlights the disagreement between Khatri and Khatri. In other words, there is an intra-sangat rift within the Khatri community in Delhi. Angered by the command to abandon customary practices such as *bhaddar*, the leaders (*pancas*) of the Khatri community disavow any association with the Khalsa and its *rahit*.

When the *sangat* came for *darshan*,
A special matter was revealed to them.
A *dharamsala* of wisdom was created there,
Listening to this wisdom with attention, the Sikhs followed it.⁴[199]
Pahul was given and the entire *sangat* imbibed it,
Five Sikhs bore witness in this.
Both the Khatri and Brahmins remained at a distance,
In their own minds they thought. ⁵[200]
'Though being a Brahmin do not perform *bhaddar*,'
'Who could achieve praise by taking this path?'
They were lost in a great delusion.
The statement of the Karanhar was ignored.⁶[201]

How many listened to this with discrimination in their minds,
 ‘It is not possible for us to break with customary tradition.’7|202|¹³⁹
 Thus the Khalsa created dissension within the Khatri community in Delhi as some decided to become Khalsa and others decided to continue with their established traditions. A series of debates regarding the Khalsa *rahit* begin when one Khatri continues his association with one who has performed *bhaddar*. With the expulsion of that *sirgum* (head-shaven one) from the community, arguments emerge, and some wealthy Khatris make an announcement in the Dara *bazaar* that no one should follow the Khalsa *rahit* until something written was received from the Guru.¹⁴⁰ Speaking to the *sangat* the Khatris proclaim that,

‘Until a written note from Huzoor [Guru Gobind Singh] arrives,’
 ‘Everyone should remain together and refrain from doing anything further.’45|240|
 Then they made this announcement,
 The *sangat* gathered there.
 There was an open discussion,
 O Brother, everyone came together. 46|241|
 On Ekadasi¹⁴¹ when they gathered,
 He [That Khatri] gave this teaching to everyone.
 ‘The teachings of the elders that we have received,’
 ‘Follow those in the same way as [you have always done].’47|242|

¹³⁹ See Appendix B, Chapter Six.

¹⁴⁰ The emphasis on a written order by the Guru is important because it highlights yet again the authority of the written word in Sikh contexts. For the community in Delhi, a simple verbal order is nothing more than hearsay and is not enough to ensure compliance.

¹⁴¹ Eleventh day of the fortnight.

Listening to this, many thought,
‘This is the right thing to do.’
Many said, ‘this is not the *rahit*,’
‘We don’t accept this matter at all.’ 48|243|¹⁴²

However, despite the Khattris’ announcement, the conflict regarding the Khalsa *rahit* does not end there. Further dissension erupts when *bhaddar* is not performed on a Khatri devoted to the Guru. Matters spiral out of control when some Khattris close the *bazaar* in protest and take their petition to a high level ruler (*hakim*) in Delhi. Relating this matter to the ruler, Sainapati writes,

Meeting the ruler, they narrated this,
‘These people have started a new path.’
‘They have abandoned the way of familial custom,’
‘They have started following another tradition.’ 22|282|
‘They all gather and say Vahiguru Ka Khalsa,’
‘Ask them carefully whatever is in their mind.’ 23|283|
‘The Patshah, he is the ruler of Delhi,’
‘They should be saying that they are your Khalsa.’
‘Ask them what constitutes their Khalsa path,’

¹⁴² See Appendix B, Chapter Six. These Sikhs who did not follow the *rahit* as proclaimed by the Guru are referred to as *khulasa* in Sainapati’s text. This term occurs only twice in Chapter Six in reference to those ‘wayward’ Sikhs who rejected the *rahit*. See verses 49 and 50 in Appendix B, Chapter Six. While some scholars argue that *khulasa* is a category that refers to the Sahaj-dhari Sikhs, there is no evidence for this claim based on a close reading of Sainapati’s text. For such a reading see Nidar Singh Nihang and Parmjit Singh. *In The Master’s Presence: The Sikhs of Hazoor Sahib Volume One: History* (Kashi House: London, 2008), 15. Khalsa and *khulasa* are derived from two different Arabic roots, *khalas* and *khulla*, respectively.

‘Talk to them in this reasoned way.’ 24|284|¹⁴³

Putting forward an interesting claim that the Guru’s Khalsa is disloyal because it challenges the Mughal Emperor’s dominion, these Khatri petitioners conflate issues of political fealty and religious obligation. Upon payment of a bribe, the ruler sides with the the petitioners until miraculously he changes his mind due to the intervening grace of the Guru through which the markets open and harmony is restored. Although resolution within the *sangat* concludes the entire episode, in the *Construction of Religious Boundaries*, Harjot Oberoi’s disregards the occurrence of resolutuion and frames the dissension in Delhi as follows,

Acceptance of Khalsa identity thus became major yardstick to gauge an individual Sikh’s loyalty to the guru. Those who were disloyal to the guru were susceptible to a series of dangers, including the possibility of never attaining salvation and turning up in hell. Despite the considerable incentives and fear of future accountability for those who did not become Khalsa, not all Sikhs became Khalsa. For instance, we know that some of Gobind Singh’s closest disciples did not undergo Khalsa initiation. Sainapat describes at length how, in the capital city of Delhi, a large number of Sikhs from the Brahman and Khatri castes strongly resisted Khalsa identity. Fearful of becoming marginal and wanting to stick to the customary cultural codes of their own lineages and castes, they turned their wrath against those among them who had become Khalsa. The new Khalsa were harassed, their shops were shut, and an economic boycott imposed against them. In seeking to turn the fluid world of Indic religious identities upside down, the Khalsa found it rough going. Sainapat hints at

¹⁴³ Appendix B, Chapter Seven.

this when he writes, ‘One one side stands the Khalsa and on the other the world.’¹⁴⁴

Focusing on the social dislocation and conflict engendered by the Khalsa, Oberoi fails to mention the harmonious resolution that occurs within the Khatri community at Delhi and between the communities in Delhi and Anandpur. Concluding his argument with verse thirty from Chapter Seven, Oberoi avoids quoting the final verses which directly follow that verse.,

Now the market was opened,
Then a truce ensued amongst the Sikhs themselves.
The stores were open and business resumed,
When the anger dissipated there was happiness. 33|293|
Meeting one another there was great peace,
Great amity could be seen.
Then the Sikhs came to the *sangat*,
However many came, their sins were forgiven. 34|294|
Then the Sikhs accepted them back into the *sangat*,
The time came for *darshan* [of Guru Gobind Singh].
The Sikhs came to the Guru’s abode [Anandpur] for *darshan*,
With happiness they sang the praises of Prabhu.35|295|
Those who had signed those petitions were all admitted [into the Guru’s *darbar*],
Through the Guru’s majesty the Sikhs came for *darshan*.36|296|¹⁴⁵

Thus far from creating an irrevocable divide within the community, Sainapati’s account allows for dissension, but ultimately stresses the achievement of

¹⁴⁴ Harjot Oberoi, *The Construction of Religious Boundaries*, 62. Verse thirty reads: ਦੋਰਰਾ। ਮਿਲਿ ਪੰਚਨ ਕੀਨੋ ਮਤਾ ਧਰੀਏ ਸੰਗਿ ਅਪਾਰ। ਏਕ ਓਰ ਬਯੋ ਖਾਲਸਾ ਏਕ ਓਰ ਸੰਸਾਰ। 30।290। See Appendix B, Chapter Seven.

¹⁴⁵ Appendix B, Chapter Seven.

resolution. The dispute in Delhi is resolved, and the episode is brought to a conclusion when the Sikhs travel to Anandpur to ask for forgiveness from the Guru. Though the *sangat* is dispersed in different cities, in this case the community in Delhi is highlighted, authority in the community is territorially and theologically centered on Anandpur and the Guru, respectively.¹⁴⁶ And even after the Guru is forced to abandon Anandgarh, the relationship between the Guru and the *sangat* is one of loyal devotion. When the Guru travels around Delhi and its environs, he is welcomed with great joy by the entire Khalsa.¹⁴⁷ While scholars continually stress the conflict between the Khalsa and the larger Sikh community, the evidence presented in the *Sri Gursobha* does not bear out their claims. In Sainapati's account of the founding of the Khalsa, we come across one of the earliest articulations of the doctrine of *gurkhalsa*, the unity of Guru and Khalsa.¹⁴⁸ Far from presenting an exclusive identity that pits Sikh against Singh or Khatri against Jat, the true *sangat* is premised upon the fundamental unity and inseparability of the Guru and his Sikhs.

¹⁴⁶ Anne Murphy argues that in light of the disagreement in Delhi the community is not territorially bounded and that, as a result, focusing on the sovereignty of Anandpur, is difficult to maintain. Building her argument from the *Sri Gursobha*, Murphy disregards the subsequent resolution of the Delhi episode when those Khatri go to Anandpur to seek forgiveness and the powerful refrain by Sainapati in Chapter Nineteen to re-inhabit Anandgarh. Her argument regarding the relative importance of Anandpur during the closing decade of the seventeenth and opening decade of the eighteenth century is problematic. See Anne Murphy, "History in the Sikh Past."

¹⁴⁷ Appendix B, Chapter Sixteen.

¹⁴⁸ For a discussion on other contemporary articulations of the doctrine of *gurkhalsa* see Chapter Three.

After the Guru

During his own lifetime, the Guru gave the entire community the name of Khalsa and in Sainapati's account, the Khalsa is a fulfillment of the legacy of the previous Gurus. However, even before the Guru's death in Nanderh, the question of the Guru's legacy looms large given the martyrdom of his four sons (*sahibzade*). While the death of the Gurus' sons was tragic, from the standpoint of Sainapati's account, their death was a triumphant testimony to the strength of the Khalsa and the legacy of their grandfather, Guru Tegh Bahadur. Although the description of their deaths does not use the word martyr (*shahid*), it is clear that their deaths represented a noble and just sacrifice. After his eldest son Ajit Singh dies in battle, Guru Gobind Singh remarks,

Hit upon horseback, that mighty warrior [Ajit Singh] engaged in this
excellent work,
Drinking from the cup of love¹⁴⁹, he became one with God. 50|519|
At that time Gobind Singh said,
'Ranjit has achieved the special status of the Khalsa in Satiguru's *darbar*.
51|520|¹⁵⁰

In addition to this description, Sainapati describes the death of the Gurus' sons as follows,

Blessed are the sons of Gurudev who showed no attachment to their
bodies,

¹⁴⁹ "*prem pyala ka*."

¹⁵⁰ Appendix B, Chapter Twelve.

They protected *dharam* in the Kaliyug, giving pride to their grandfather
[Guru Tegh Bahadur]. 74|543|

Fateh Singh and Jujhar Singh gave their lives,

The three worlds knew of their sacrifice. 75|544|¹⁵¹

In death, the Gurus' sons become exemplars of the Khalsa and inheritors of their Grandfather's legacy, a legacy which is similarly described by Sainapati in the beginning of the *Sri Gursobha*.¹⁵² Just as Guru Gobind Singh participates in the legacy of the previous nine Gurus, so too do his sons' lives share in and reflect that legacy. This question of legacy is a pressing issue in the *Sri Gursobha*, especially when in the aftermath of the evacuation of Anandgarh and the Battle of Chamkaur, the Guru was left without his sons and wives.

When Kartar left Chamkaur, assuming another appearance he departed in
a different direction,

¹⁵¹ Appendix B, Chapter Twelve. In *Martyrdom in the Sikh Tradition*, Louis E. Fenech argues that the concept of martyrdom in the *Sri Gursobha* cannot be equated within the semantic range of the Arabic term *shahid*. With regards to Sainapati's decision not to use the term *shahid*, Fenech writes that, "But these authors [Sainapati], like almost all eighteenth-century Sikh poets, choose not to appropriate the word *shahid* to describe those Sikhs, who died while fighting the oppressed or testifying to the truth, nor do we find the terms 'shahadat' or 'shahidi' in their accounts. The general lack of specific terms to designate the concept of martyr and martyrdom seems to indicate that these ideas were not remarkable features of the nascent Khalsa Sikh tradition, their presence notwithstanding." Louis E. Fenech, *Martyrdom in the Sikh Tradition: Playing the 'Game of Love'* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000), 8. Quite to the contrary, in sacrificing their lives the sons of the Guru protected *karam* and *dharam*, thus "testifying to the truth."

¹⁵² Guru Tegh Bahadur emerged, He covered all of creation with his protection.
He protected *karam* and *dharam*, His eternal story was witnessed in the Kaliyug.|14|
His fame spread across the world like this, He safeguarded all *dharam*.
Whose praise resounds in the three worlds, Satiguru, protected honor in this way.|15|
Appendix B, Chapter One.

Leaving aside wealth, home, sons, and wives, in this way residing in
ekonkar,

Abandoning all possessions in an instant, he assumed the form of a
sannyasi.

Gobind Singh again fashioned the world and reset the earth and sky.

2|546|¹⁵³

From the time of fourth Guru onwards, the office of the Guru had stayed within the Sodhi family, and now without any sons or grandsons, the question of Guru Gobind Singh's succession would have loomed large. In one of the most interesting episodes in the *Sri Gursobha*, a group of Sikhs and Singhs suggest that the Guru get married, perhaps in recognition of the fact that he is now without family and, by extension, a tangible legacy. The episode occurs as the Guru is travelling to the Deccan,

It occurred to the Sikhs and Singhs,

They said the following to Prabhu.

'Prabhu, please get married,'

'Take a step forward on the path.' 16|611|

Listening to all of this, Prabhu made preparations,

Commanding the Singhs, all [of the required] items were brought together.

With these preparations readied, trumpets rang out with joy,

Getting married, Prabhu departed from there. 17|612|¹⁵⁴

¹⁵³ Appendix B, Chapter Thirteen.

¹⁵⁴ Appendix B, Chapter Fourteen. Although it is not clear when the Guru married for a third time, it is possible that this is a reference to his marriage to Mata Sahib Kaur. Sikh tradition maintains that the Guru married her in 1701, but it is not clear yet what the source for this determination is.

Although Sainapati attempts to offset the losses of the Guru by emphasizing the unfathomable deeds of the Guru (*rachna raci*), it is clear that efforts to secure the Guru's lineage began during the last years of his life.

After the second siege of Anandgarh, and during his extensive travels between 1705-1708 through northern and western India, it would have been feasible for the Guru re-settle his community far away from the intrigues of the Rajput hill chiefs and the Mughal state. Given the trajectory of his father's travels in distant eastern communities in Assam and Bengal, and his own birth in Patna, the Guru had very personal examples regarding the viability of living outside of the Punjab for an extended period of time. Furthermore, given the extent of *sangats* dispersed throughout India, the Guru would have had no problem in establishing himself elsewhere. However, based on a number of extant *hukumname* (letters of command), the Guru was firmly committed to returning to Punjab, specifically to Kahlur, the region around Anandpur.¹⁵⁵ In one *hukumnama* he informs the *panth* of his intentions,

“I will return in a matter of days, My command to the entire Khalsa community is that you gather together and once I return to Kahlur, the

¹⁵⁵ See Ganda Singh ed., *Hukamname: Guru Sahiban, Mata Sahiban, Banda Singh Ate Khalsa Ji De*, 176-179.

entire Khalsa should come fully armed in my presence and they will be blessed.”¹⁵⁶

This vision of return is echoed in Sainapati's text and is also given a concrete focal point – Anandgarh. There is no generic call for a return to Amritsar or the conquer of any regional or imperial capitals such as Lahore or Delhi, respectively, but a specific exhortation to return to the Guru's home. In addition to the evidence in available *hukumname* that he deputed contingents to prepare for his return to the Punjab, in the *Sri Gursobha* itself mention is made to the Guru's deputation of a contingent to return back to the *des*, i.e. Punjab.¹⁵⁷ There is no mention of Banda Bahadur, but the advance expedition of Sikhs back to the Punjab fits in well with that episode and with the general understanding that the Guru himself was planning to return to the Punjab after his long sojourn through northern and western India. However, before the Guru could return to the Punjab, fate intervened and he was mortally wounded in Nanderh (Maharashtra). With his impending death, the Sikhs were inconsolable. Wringing their hands and beating their chests, the Sikhs arrived in the Guru's presence for *darshan*. In addition to receiving *darshan* they performed *ardas*, and asked questions of the Guru regarding the future,

One day everyone came in front of him,

¹⁵⁶ ਅਸੀਂ ਭੀ ਥੋੜੇ ਹੀ ਦਿਨਾਂ ਨੇ ਆਵੇਤੇ ਹਾਂ ਸ੍ਰਬਤਿ ਸੰਗਤ ਖਾਲਸੇ ਨੇ ਮੇਰਸ ਹੁਕਮੁ ਹੈ ਆਪਸ ਮੇ ਮੇਲੁ ਕਰਣਾ ਜਦਿ ਅਸੀਂ ਕਹਲੂਰ ਆਵੇਤੇ ਤਦਿ ਸ੍ਰਬਤਿ ਖਾਲਸੇ ਹਥੀਆਰ ਬੰਨਕੇ ਹਜੂਰ ਆਵਣਾ ਜੋ ਆਵੈਗਾ ਸੋ ਨਿਹਾਲ ਹੋਵੈਗਾ। Ibid., 177. There are several *hukumnamas* in which this intention is expressed.

¹⁵⁷ Appendix B, Chapter Eighteen, verse four.

Gathered together, the Singhs asked questions.

‘Prabhu, what form are you going to take?’

He gave answers to this in the following way. 40|805|

At that time, the Guru said these words,

‘The Khalsa is my form,’ he said.

‘My affection is with the Khalsa.’

‘I have bestowed my mantle of authority upon the Khalsa.’ 41|806|

‘The Khalsa is my form, I am with the Khalsa,’

‘From beginning to end, my light will be in the Khalsa.’ 42|807|¹⁵⁸

According to this account, before he dies the Guru consciously elevates the entire community to the status of Khalsa. Although he would no longer be physically present, he tells his Khalsa that he will be present in the community and, that as a result, the community would represent the authority of the Guru (*guru panth*). In addition to the importance of the community as a locus of authority, the Guru also confers importance upon the verses of the Gurus and establishes the presence of the Guru in the *shabad* (*guru granth*).

He is the Khalsa whose heart is free of delusion,

He who remains free of delusion, will be the Khalsa of Satiguru.

Our Satiguru is transcendent, reflect upon the unchanging *shabad*,

Whoever meditates in his heart on the *shabad*, will achieve liberation.

Its measure is infinite, it is impossible to describe the extent of its form,

Its light appears in every place, detached from all else, I seek its

protection. 43|808|

¹⁵⁸ Appendix B, Chapter Eighteen.

All bliss follows from reciting Gobind's name, recite it daily with affection,

The mantra of Gurudev is the essence of all,

All snares are destroyed in a moment, receiving *gyan gita* at Gurudev's refuge,

Cries of victory resounded through the three worlds and fourteen realms when Satiguru elevated the Khalsa. 58|823|¹⁵⁹

As one of the earliest, if not earliest, articulations of the doctrine of *guru panth* and *guru granth*, in Sainapati's account the Guru secures his legacy by elevating the entire community as the Khalsa. The importance of the Guru's verses (*gurbani*, *shabad*) in the succession of authority was established by Guru Nanak and continued by Guru Gobind Singh upon his death.

Building upon the collective authority of the *sangat* as Khalsa in the wake of the Guru's death, Sainapati projects a triumphant collective vision in which the Khalsa will re-inhabit Anandgarh in fulfillment of the Guru's wishes. In the *Sri Gursobha*, Sainapati details the specific travels of the Guru throughout regions – Punjab, Rajputana, the Deccan – and throughout cities – Delhi, Agra, Mathura, Gwalior, Ajmer, Udaipur, etc. – and displays an awareness of the geo-political landscape of Hind and Bharat. However, corroborating the evidence found in contemporary *hukumname* regarding the Guru's intention to return to Anandgarh, Sainapati also envisions a return to Anandgarh wherein the collective rule of the community, the Khalsa Raj, will be established. In Chapter Nineteen entitled,

¹⁵⁹ Appendix B, Chapter Eighteen.

“The Praise of the Guru’s Arrival,” Sainapati, channels the collective aspiration of the community, and promises the Guru that the Khalsa will re-inhabit Anandgarh.

He writes,

Destroying numerous enemies, we will disperse them helter-skelter,
Leaving their countries, where will those kings hide themselves?
You made the divine light shine in the world, people in the three worlds
will sing your praises,
It is our good destiny, we promise this to you, we will re-establish
Anandgarh.6|830|
Doing the work of the virtuous, Hari protected their honor, and we will
work to that end,
Wielding the sword, there will be no mercy, we will destroy all of the evil
of our enemies,
Dispersing them with arrows, everyone will be scattered,
It is our good destiny, we promise this to you, we will re-establish
Anandgarh.7|831|
Fighting many armies, we will establish our splendor,
Killing innumerable enemies, no one will be able to stop us,
With a dry piece of grass in their mouths, those kings will save themselves
from us,
It is our good destiny, we promise this to you, we will re-establish
Anandgarh. 8|832|
Once we reside in Anand[garh], then the kings will only meditate on one
name,
Keeping the Khalsa in our every breath, we will profess no other truth,
In an instant, all the sins of the world are destroyed, there will be no evil
deeds anywhere,

It is our good destiny, we promise this to you, we will re-establish
Anandgarh.^{9|833}¹⁶⁰

In Sainapati's vision of the future, Anandgarh functions as a concrete metaphor for the establishment of the Khalsa Raj.

There is the intriguing possibility in Sainapati's account that the Guru himself will ride upon a horse brandishing a sword leading the charge back to Anandgarh. In the first verse of Chapter Nineteen, there is a semantic ambiguity that allows for the translation of the Punjabi, “ਤੁਰਕੀ ਅਸ ਅਛਿ ਸੁਪਛਿ ਬਡੈ ਤਿਹ ਉਪਰ ਆਪ ਸੁਹਾਵਹਿੰਗੇ” as either “You will look resplendent, mounted on a Turkish horse that fly with wings” or “We will look resplendent, mounted on Turkish horses that fly with wings.” Some have commented on the resemblance of this image with Visnu's final *avatar*, Kalki, also referred to as Nihkalank *avatar*, but given the fact that this chapter occurs after the cremation of the Guru and the investiture of his authority in the Khalsa, it is more likely that this image reflects the inspirational role of the Guru in the return of the community to Anandgarh.¹⁶¹ Apart from this semantic ambiguity, however, in the remaining verses of the

¹⁶⁰ Appendix B, Chapter Nineteen.

¹⁶¹ For an interpretation of the Guru leading the charge as a future *avatar* see J.S. Grewal, “Praising the Khalsa: Sainapat's *Gursobha*” in *The Khalsa: Sikh and Non-Sikh Perspectives*, ed. J.S. Grewal (New Delhi: Manohar, 2004), 35-46. Also, the Namdhari tradition's belief that the Guru did not die at Nanderh is based on Sevadas' account that after the Guru's cremation there was no trace of either his weapons (*shashtar*) or bodily remains (*sharir*). Because they do not refer to this episode in Sainapati it is possible that the semantic ambiguity can be resolved in favor of the reading – “We will look resplendent, mounted on Turkish horses that fly with wings.”

chapter, the prophetic return to Anandgarh is envisioned by Sainapati as the promise of the entire community to the Guru.¹⁶²

In both his life and death, Sainapati emphasizes the singular life and legacy of Guru Gobind Singh. While the Guru's life was singular, in the first decade of the eighteenth century there were several accounts of his life in addition to Sainapati's *Sri Gursobha*. The next chapter will turn to an examination of three other contemporary narratives of the Guru's life written in the first decade of the eighteenth century – *Apani Katha*, the *Das GurKatha*, and the *Parchi Patshahi Dasvin Ki*.

¹⁶² “It is our good destiny, we promise this to you, we will re-establish Anandgarh.” See Appendix B, Chapter Nineteen.

Chapter Three: Four Contemporary Narratives of Guru Gobind Singh

In addition to the Sainapati's *Sri Gursobha*, there are other contemporary narratives of Guru Gobind Singh's life available in both manuscripts and modern printed editions. Beginning with *Apani Katha*, "My Story," most likely attributed to an anonymous poet at the Anandpur court (1697), followed by the *Das GurKatha*, "Tales of the Ten Gurus," by the poet Kankan completed after either the founding of the Khalsa (late 1690s) or after the death of the Guru (1708), and concluding with the *Parchi Patshahi Dasvin Ki*, "Vignettes of the Tenth Emperor," by Sevasdas completed in 1709 soon after the death of Guru Gobind Singh, these narratives represent three different first-hand contemporary written accounts that focus on the life of Guru Gobind Singh. When read in conjunction with Sainapati's *Sri Gursobha*, these three narratives are an invaluable source from which scholars can approach the life of Guru Gobind Singh. None of these accounts individually trace the Guru's life fully from birth to death, but when read collectively they follow the entire arc of his life and even address his legacy beyond death. These accounts are remarkable for the consensus they display regarding the events in and meaning of the Guru's life. In addition to their value as historical sources for reconstructing the Guru's life, however, they are also lyrical expressions of poetic verse that relate the truth and beauty of a historical figure who may have been seen by these authors as a patron, king, and/or divine man. This chapter will compare and contrast these biographical accounts of the

Guru written in order to arrive at an understanding of how his life was understood within Sikh sources during his lifetime.

The Blind Men and the Elephant

The parable of the group of blind men and elephant is a well known example of the stubborn subjectivity of experience and the relativity of truth. By conflating the part with the whole, the groping of the blind men expresses poignantly an epistemological dilemma regarding the acquisition of knowledge. Quite often as scholars of Indian religious traditions, we are forced to operate like those proverbial blind men, grasping at fragments with the full knowledge that our own scholarly assumptions and narratives will of necessity be incomplete and partial for at least two reasons. First, as religious studies scholars, since our responsibility is not to adjudicate the “truth” of religious experience we can and must only re-present it from a scholarly remove; simply put, we are in the business of representation not truth. Second, our ability in re-presenting this experience – ranging from historical to the contemporary or textual to the ethnographic – is invariably limited by our access to sources. While the first limitation will always render us blind, the second limitation can afford us varying degrees of visibility depending on our object(s) of investigation.

As discussed earlier in this dissertation, having emerged in the relatively clear light of history, the Sikh tradition affords scholars access to a history that has been well preserved in both its literary and material sources. With regards to

the extant and available corpora of texts in the Sikh tradition, we are fortunate to have the ability to date and locate these written sources from the time of Guru Nanak himself. The biographical literature documenting the lives of the Gurus can be traced back to the *Puratan Janam Sakhi*, whose earliest extant manuscript carries the date of 1640.¹⁶³ Written down a half a century after his death, the *Puratan Janam Sakhi* is the most developed biographical narrative of any of the ten Guru until we come to the period of Guru Gobind Singh. Whereas biographical narratives of the previous nine Gurus were either available after their death or not at all, in the case of Guru Gobind Singh, four biographical narratives were written during his own lifetime – *Apani Katha*, *Sri Gursobha*, *Das GurKatha*, *Parchi Pathshahi Dasvin Ki*.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶³ While Macauliffe dates the text to 1588, G.S. Mann places it prior to 1600. For more see G.S. Mann, “Stories of the Founder: The *Puratan Janam Sakhi* Re-Visited.”

¹⁶⁴ This chapter will focus on these four narratives, although there is another biographical narrative in the *Chaupa Singh Rahitnama* that will not receive direct treatment in this dissertation. While the manuscript of the *Chaupa Singh Rahitnama* carries a date of 1700 in its opening section, it is unclear at this point when the biographical narrative section was inserted. However, even if this account was included, it would only augment the argument presented in this chapter because the narrative account in *Chaupa Singh* is extremely similar to the accounts of *Apani Katha*, *Shri Gursobha*, *Das GurKatha*, *Parchi Patshahi Dasvin Ki*. In comparison to the four accounts that will be discussed in this chapter, the *Chaupa Singh* is the only one in which dates are provided for key events in Guru Gobind Singh’s life, i.e. birth, marriage, etc. In addition to these narratives, there may be additional narratives in the *Sarab Loh Granth*, “All Steel” Granth (1698), a text that I hope to examine in the future.

In an article entitled “The Sant Movement and North Indian Sufis,” Bruce Lawrence examines the available biographical literature of pan-Indian religious figures and writes,

Other than the Buddha (whose biography is dependent on Chinese as well as Indian records), Asoka (who left his own edicts on stone tablets), and certain royal personages from the first millenium AD, e.g., Harshavardhana (who are known from court chronicles they commissioned about themselves) are there extant historical biographies that describe major Hindu or Buddhist religious figures? Shankara’s life is shrouded in mythical obscurity, as is Ramanuja’s and Madhava’s. Can one locate any Indian religious leader prior to Kabir and Guru Nanak whose biography can be more securely traced than either of theirs?¹⁶⁵

Based on his reading of the *Puratan Janam Sakhi* through W.H. McLeod’s scholarship, however, Lawrence qualifies his inclusion of Guru Nanak’s biographical narrative because it is more hagiographical than historical. As a

¹⁶⁵ Bruce Lawrence, “The Sant Movement and North Indian Sufis” in *The Sants: Studies in a Devotional Tradition of India*, ed. Karine Schomer and W.H. McLeod (Berkeley: Berkeley Religious Studies Series, 1987), 363. Even though Lawrence argues that there is more history to be found in the *tazkira* literature of Indo Muslim Sufis because it does not “swallow up or distort beyond recognition the non-legendary details of their lives,” the fact remains that even for Sufi figures there can be a time-delay between the historical life and the written record. Ibid. In the case of Muinuddin Chishti (1141-1230) there are no written accounts of him until the fourteenth century. Additionally, it is not fair to lump Nanak within the same hagiographical netherworld as figures such as Namdev, Kabir, Mirabai, etc. These are figures for whom we do not even possess concrete historical dates. The *Puratan Janam Sakhi* is a rare example of an extensive biography written in medieval north India. The *Dadu Janma Lila* written by Jangopal was written somewhere between 1620-1720 and is the only other similar counterpart of its type.

result, he questions its value as a source for learning about Guru Nanak's life.¹⁶⁶ This distinction between the historical and hagiographical is difficult to maintain upon closer examination of this text in particular¹⁶⁷, and similar texts from pre-colonial India in general. Writing about this false dichotomy between history and hagiography, Rao, Shulman, and Subrahmanyam, propose that history can be read in different genres of composition by taking into account their "texture." Arguing that "Writing history is *not* simply a simple matter of generating non-literary facticity," these authors argue that any genre can encode historical information and narrative.¹⁶⁸ They write,

If *purana* is the pre-eminent literary form, history will be written as *purana*; if *kavya* dominates, we will find history as *kavya*; if prose chronicles come the fore, they too will serve history. This means that in any such genre we are likely to find both history and non-history – to be distinguished by textual considerations as markers, shifters, syntax, lexical choices, evidentials, density and intensity of expression, structured gaps and silences, metrical devices, various phono-aesthetic indicators, and

¹⁶⁶ With regards to the *janam sakhi* literature, W.H. McLeod writes, "A very substantial portion of it material is obviously legend and much of what cannot be summarily dismissed in this way is open to grave suspicion on other grounds. In a number of cases, however, there is an evident possibility that some historical fact may lie beneath a superstructure of legend." W.H. McLeod, *Guru Nanak and the Sikh Religion*, 9.

¹⁶⁷ For an opposite reading of the *Puratan Janam Sakhi* see "Stories of the Founder: The *Puratan Janam Sakhi* Re-Visited" Paper presented by G.S. Mann at the conference "Expanding Horizons: Sikh Studies at the Turn of the 21st Century" on November 14, 2009.

¹⁶⁸ Velcheru Narayana Rao, David Shulman, and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *Textures of Time: Writing History in South India 1600-1800*, 4.

finely calibrated suggestions of the domain of a statement's intended application and potential meaning.¹⁶⁹

As discussed in Chapter One, the characterization of Guru Nanak as a *sant* with its attendant associations of non-sectarian and non-historical, has led scholars to foreground his theology while relegating historical concerns to the background. Reinscribing characterizations of Guru Nanak as a *sant* and Guru Gobind Singh as a warrior, the impetus for the action of these two Gurus is understood to derive from inner piety versus external pressure, respectively. As a result of these false dichotomies scholars are forced to resort to the language of “rupture” and “contradiction” to explain the development of the Sikh *panth* over time. These scholarly arguments of “rupture” are often predicated on the deployment of particular literary genres. For example, the *janam sakhi* literature is seen to embody the fluid and eclectic spirituality of Guru, while the *gurbilas* and *rahit* literature associated with Guru Gobind Singh embodies the exclusive identity of the Khalsa. In fact, scholars such as Surjit Hans claim that it is with the literature of Guru Gobind Singh's period that both God and the Sikhs enter history.¹⁷⁰ In line with earlier arguments regarding the problematic classification of Guru with literary genre, the examination of these four biographical accounts of Guru Gobind Singh's life begins with the simple observation that the genre most

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ Of this literature he writes, “The Sikhs have painfully started entering into history” and that Gobind “God enters into history with Guru Gobind Singh.” Surjit Hans, *A Reconstruction of Sikh History From Sikh Literature*, 231 & 233.

associated with the tenth Guru, the *gurbilas*, is in fact first used in the *Gurbilas Patshahi*.¹⁷¹ Thus while many scholars focus on *gurbilas* as the representative literary genre associated with the narration of Guru Gobind Singh's life, his life was actually written about in a wide variety of genres – *parchi*, *gursobha*, and *katha*. There was no singular literary genre within which the Guru's life. Rather the genres were as numerous as the poets who wrote about the Guru.

Writing the Guru's Praise

With regards to vexing issues of authorship within different genres of Indian literature, we often encounter trans-historical personalities such as Vyasa or Manu, but more often than not, we are left with two possibilities: attribution to an imputed author or sheer anonymity. Emerging within the *bhakti* milieu of medieval north India, the Sikh Gurus, like other devotional poets, inserted their identities into their poetry. The Sikh Gurus both shared in the collective authority of the signature 'Nanak' and specified their individual status by using the

171 With regards to this inaugural *gurbilas*, Hans writes that, "The *Gurbilas* is a formal disaster. It is a combination of *janamsakhi* genre and the *gurbilas* form, without the doctrinal intent of the former and the socio-religious urgency of the latter. A conventional description of battle is followed by details of arrangement of a marriage, the foundation of a town comes before a skirmish, the killing of a few butchers keeps company with the succession of Guru Angad. Fighting, domestic rituals and Sikh mythography are neither related to one another nor subsumed under an over-vaulting religious principle, or political urgency. Perhaps the work accurately reflects the decline of religious enthusiasm under Sikh rule when it was reduced to a bundle of fetishes, certainly for the laity and possibly for the ruling classes. The *Gurbilas* Chevin *Patshahi* can be sub-titled 'Magic and the Decline of Religion.'" 272. Hans dates it to the 19th century, but manuscript evidence suggests it is 1718. See Fauja Singh, "The Date of Writing of *Gurbilas Patshahi VI*," 62-66.

designation of *mahal* (position). Thus, while Guru Nanak was ‘M1,’ Guru Angad was ‘M2,’ Guru Amardas was ‘M3’, etc. Given the precedent of denoting authorship by a Guru and the thriving literary *darbar* established by Guru Gobind Singh at Anandpur, the absence of any clear evidence regarding texts that may or may not have been authored by him is striking. Questions regarding what was written by the Guru range from the extreme spectrum of ‘everything’ to ‘nothing,’ with the inconclusive assessment of ‘something’ thrown in for good measure. In some compositions found in the court anthologies now referred to as the *Dasam Granth* and *Sarab Loh Granth*, the semblance of an authorial signature is indicated by the phrase *sri mukhvak patshahi dasvin*, “from the mouth of the tenth sovereign.”¹⁷² However, its appearance in manuscripts is arbitrary and its use in later printed editions of the *Dasam Granth* does not conform to the earlier manuscripts. If *sri mukhvak patshahi dasvin* is to be understood as the “signature” of Guru Gobind Singh it would mark a break from the standard signature of ‘Nanak’ used by the six previous Gurus. The compositions that are generally attributed to Guru Gobind Singh – Jap, Savaiyye, Benati Chaupai – were written early enough to have been included in the final text of the *Guru Granth*, and given the role of the tenth Guru in elevating the text to the status of Guru at the time of his death, it is difficult to account for the absence of his compositions unless it

¹⁷² For more on the use of *sri mukhvak patshahi dasvin* see G.S. Mann, “Sources for the Study of Guru Gobind Singh’s Life and Times,” 281-282 and Robin Rinehart, “Strategies for Interpreting the *Dasam Granth*.”

was a conscious decision on his part. The inclusion of the Gurus' verses has historically occurred not posthumously but during their own lifetime, and given contemporary references to the inclusion of compositions attributed to the Guru in the daily liturgical schedule at Anandpur, it is difficult to explain this authorial discrepancy.¹⁷³

Setting aside the question of Guru Gobind Singh's own authorial hand, there is far more information on the poets and scribes that comprised the literary *darbar* at Anandpur. In addition to the traditional fifty-two court poets (*darbari ratan*) in residence at Anandpur, there would have been any number of unmentioned and anonymous number of poets, and poets for whom we have names but no record of them in the traditional enumeration of the *darbari ratan*.¹⁷⁴ The authors of the four contemporary accounts that will be compared in this chapter are rather evenly distributed amongst these categories. While Sainapati finds mentions as a *darbari ratan*, the poet of *Apani Katha* was most likely an anonymous figure who came to the Guru's court in search of patronage. Both Kankan and Sevasdas identify themselves by name in the signature line of their respective accounts but their presence is not noted amongst court poets at

¹⁷³ See Ami P. Shah, "Liturgical Compositions in the *Dasam Granth*" *Journal of Punjab Studies* 15, 1&2 (2008): 97-135.

¹⁷⁴ See Piara Singh Padam, *Sri Guru Gobind Singh Ji De Darbari Ratan* (Patiala: Kala Mandir, 1976)

Anandpur.¹⁷⁵ At the end of his composition, Kankan writes of his return to Lahore suggesting a Punjabi background, and given Sevadas' command of Punjabi it is likely that he would have come from an educated Punjabi background as well. Thus, with the exception of the anonymous poet who authored *Apani Katha*, the other three accounts appear to have been written by three Punjabi based authors. The issue of their backgrounds aside, it is probable that the Guru would have met these authors at some point. Based on the reference found in the *Guru Ratanmal* to the correction of Sainapati's text by Guru Gobind Singh and Sainapati's presence in the Guru's *darbar*, it is likely that the Guru was familiar with Sainapati; the anonymous poet who wrote the *Apani Katha* would have been in residence at Paunta and Anandpur and would have most certainly interacted with the Guru. While it is not clear if the Guru would have met Kankan or Sevadas, given the depth of their devotion to the Guru it is likely that they would have been physically proximate to him at some point. Like Sainapati, neither Kankan or Sevadas have the appellation of "Singh" to their name, but that fact does not seem to have obstructed their writing or reception of patronage by the Guru.¹⁷⁶ Thus, writing between 1697-1709, it is fair to argue that these authors were first-hand observers of the Guru and that they lived within shared spatio-temporal parameters. Despite their presence on the same historical stage as the Guru,

¹⁷⁵ Chaupa Singh is classified as a *darbari ratan*. As a Chibber Brahmin, Chaupa Singh would have been well known to the Guru as his family was employed in the service of the Gurus for some time.

¹⁷⁶ See Chapter Two for a discussion of Sainapati's name.

however, it is not without irony that these chronologically driven accounts do not provide any dates whatsoever.¹⁷⁷ The dates of these accounts are provided by manuscript evidence, and in the case of Kankan's *Das GurKatha*, by internal dating based on the terminus of event narration. Based on the manuscript evidence it is clear that these accounts were first and foremost written narratives. There is no early layer of oral transmission later supplanted by written texts. These authors recorded their accounts in their own hand for posterity once again highlighting the importance of writing in the Sikh context and the role of the Guru as patron. Written in verse and prose, the language of these accounts falls on a spectrum of Punjabi and Braj Bhasha but they are all recorded in the *gurmukhi* script.

The *Apani Katha* is the earliest narrative of Guru Gobind Singh's life that we possess with a composition date of 1697.¹⁷⁸ Comprised of two hundred and fifty six verses, the *Apani Katha* situates Guru Gobind Singh within a framework of spiritual and lineal succession from the previous nine Gurus. It begins with the divine mission entrusted to Guru Gobind Singh by Prabhu (God) during the

¹⁷⁷ The only date provided is in Sainapati's invocation of 1701 as the year when his writing commenced.

¹⁷⁸ In scholarship the term *Apani Katha* is not often used to describe this account and it is instead referred to as the *Bachittar Natak*. However, the appellation of this account as the *Bachittar Natak* is misleading because in the early manuscripts of the period this composition occurs alongside other compositions in a section entitled the *Bachittar Natak Granth*. According to G.S. Mann, "Since this particular text [*Apani Katha*] appeared at the head of the *Bachittar Natak Granth*, it began to be called by this name." G.S. Mann, "Sources for the Study of Guru Gobind Singh's Life and Times."

Kaliyug, proceeds to relate the birth of the Guru at Patna, his upbringing and life up until 1697, with great emphasis placed upon various battles. It ends with a praise of the power of God, referred to as Sarabkal, as the author expresses his desire to further recollect his previous lives in the Satyayug.¹⁷⁹ The text opens with Guru Gobind Singh immersed in meditation in his penultimate birth upon Hemkunt mountain having received the command by Prabhu to establish *dharam* in the Kaliyug.¹⁸⁰ Prabhu relates to the soon to be Guru how the others he had sent to establish *dharam* – ranging from Gorakhnath and Dattatreya to Brahma and Muhammad – violated his command by selfishly establishing themselves in his stead. Taking birth with an awareness and acceptance of his divine mission, Gobind takes birth in Patna and is immediately thrown into the work of *dharam* after his father's death. After the lengthy narration of battles against treacherous Rajputs and Mughals, the composition ends with a general praise of the Guru and the importance of the company of the virtuous (*sant* and *sadh*). Guru Nanak and Babur also find mention in the composition as the emperor of religion (*dinshah*) and king of the world (*dunipati*), respectively. However, given the composition date of 1697, there is no mention of the founding of the Khalsa, developments

¹⁷⁹ Whereas the accounts of *Apani Katha* and the *Chaupa Singh Rahitnama* mention the birth and childhood of Guru Gobind Singh, the other three accounts – *Sri Gursobha*, *Das GurKatha*, and *Parchi Patshahi Dasvin Ki*, begin their narration with the Guru as a young adult.

¹⁸⁰ From Paunta, the Hemkunt mountains are visible. From this fact it is possible to infer that the poet of the *Apani Katha* first came to Paunta and then moved to Anandpur when the Guru shifted residence. Personal communication with G.S. Mann.

within the community after Anandpur was abandoned in 1704-05 such as Guru Gobind Singh's travels through Delhi to the Deccan or his meeting with the Mughal emperor Bahadur Shah, or the death of the Guru at Nanderh in 1708. Though this account appears to be autobiographical, it was definitely written by an unnamed poet whose anonymity suggests that he was a poet from the trans-Yamuna region who came to Paunta in search of patronage; the poet's use of Braj Bhasha is also suggestive in that regard.¹⁸¹

Following the *Apani Katha*, is Sainapati's *Sri Gursobha* which carries an invocation date of 1701 and was most likely completed in the immediate aftermath of the Guru's death in 1708. While the early chapters of Sainapati are deeply indebted to the narrative from *Apani Katha*, the *Sri Gursobha* extends the temporal frame of *Apani Katha* to 1708. Of all the biographical narratives available from the Guru's life, Sainapati's account has the longest chronological frame, extending from approximately 1688 to 1708. It is also the longest account registering a total of nine hundred and thirty four verses. Unlike the anonymous author of *Apani Katha*, Sainapati was court poet from the area of Lahore.¹⁸²

¹⁸¹ For more on the movement of poets in search of patronage in medieval north India see Allison Busch, "Literary Responses to the Mughal Imperium: The Historical Poems of Kesavdas" *South Asia Research* 25.1:31-54 and Heidi Pauwels, "The Saint, the Warlord, and the Emperor: Discourses of Braj Bhakti and Bundela Loyalty" *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 52(2009): 187-228. For information about the movement of poets into the court of Guru Gobind Singh see G.S. Mann, "Sources for the Study of Guru Gobind Singh's Life and Times," 247.

¹⁸² For more on Sainapati see Chapter Two.

Based on the limited manuscript evidence and printed edition of Kankan's *Das GurKatha*, the entire composition can either be dated to after the founding of the Khalsa or the death of Guru Gobind Singh.¹⁸³ Kankan's account of Guru Gobind Singh's life begins in the immediate aftermath of his father, Guru Tegh Bahadur's execution.¹⁸⁴ Following Guru Tegh Bahadur's execution, Kankan makes it clear that the "essence" of the guruship (*gurai*) would now reside in Guru Gobind Singh,

Satiguru gave his head but he did not betray his faith.

Protecting the *janeu* and *tika*, sing Prabhu's praise.

While cries of distress filled the world, there were cries of victory in heaven.

In order to congratulate Indra, you arrived Murari.

Today there is no reason to fear in Indrapuri.

The Sodhi leader in whom the essence of guruship has come to reside.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸³ There are two known manuscripts of Kankan's text and I have examined one of them. The printed edition of the text edited by Gurmukh Singh brings the narration of events to 1708 while the manuscript version ends after the founding of the Khalsa. The other manuscript may be in Patiala and I hope to examine it in the near future. I have included English translations of both versions of Guru Gobind Singh's life in Appendix C of this dissertation. For an alternative dating of *Das GurKatha* to 1699 see Nidar Singh Nihang and Parmjit Singh, *In The Master's Presence: The Sikhs of Hazoor Sahib Volume One: History*.

¹⁸⁴ In the *Das GurKatha* the longest accounts belong to Guru Hargobind and Guru Gobind Singh with Guru Tegh Bahadur coming in at third. Accounts of the remaining seven Gurus' lives are evenly distributed and rather brief.

¹⁸⁵ ਦੇਹਰਾ। ਸੀਸ ਦੀਯਾ ਤਹਿ ਸਤਿਗੁਰੂ ਸਿਰਰ ਨ ਦੀਨਾ ਜਾਇ॥ ਜੰਵੂ ਟਿਕਾ ਰਖਿਯਾਚਲੈ ਪ੍ਰਭੂ ਗੁਨ ਗਾਇ॥ 208

ਹਯ ਹਯ ਹਯ ਸਭ ਜਗ ਭਯਾ ਸੁਰਗ ਲੋਕ ਜਯਕਾਰ॥ ਭਈ ਬਧਾਈ ਇੰਦ੍ਰ ਕੇ ਆਏ ਆਪਿ ਮੁਰਾਰਿ॥ 209
ਇੰਦ੍ਰਪੁਰੀ ਕੇ ਆਜ ਤੇ ਭਯ ਕਾਹੂ ਕੇ ਨਾਹਿ॥ ਸੋਢੀ ਪਤਿ ਗੁਰੂਅਨ ਗੁਰੂ ਬਸੇ ਆਇ ਜਿਨਿ ਮਾਂਹਿ॥ 210
Gurmukh Singh, ed., *Sanchee Das GurKatha Krit Kavi Kankan*, 57.

Whereas the *Apani Katha* and *Sri Gursobha* only allude to Guru Tegh Bahadur's execution and martyrdom referring to his protection of *tilak* and *janeu*, Kankan's text describes in greater detail the capture and execution of the ninth Guru at the hands of the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb.¹⁸⁶ Upon hearing of his father's sacrifice, Guru Gobind Singh dispatches a Mazbi Sikh (untouchable) to Delhi to secure the remains of his father so that his funeral rites can be properly performed in Anandpur. As a result of his father's execution Guru Gobind Singh decides to establish the Khalsa and avenge his father's death. To do so he enlists the expertise of Brahmins from Kashi (Benaras) to conduct a *homa* (fire sacrifice) to the Goddess, referred to as Devi and/or Durga, at Naina Devi.¹⁸⁷ Ultimately when the Devi arrives, the Brahmin's assistance is futile and Guru Gobind Singh is granted his request to establish an invincible *panth*. Upon receiving this assurance, Guru Gobind Singh establishes the Khalsa and administers *pahul* (initiation) and gives the name of *gurkhalsa*, the Guru's Khalsa, to the community. By instructing them to stay away from the *panj mel* (forbidden five

¹⁸⁶ *Tilak* and *janeu* are references to Hindu religious symbols. In the *Das GurKatha*, the plight of persecuted Pandits finds mention in the account of Guru Tegh Bahadur's life: ਅੰਗਰੇਜ਼ੇਬ ਹੈ ਜਾਤ ਕਸਾਈ॥ ਹਿੰਦੂਆਨਿ ਕੀ ਤਿਨ ਕੀਨ ਚੰਡਾਈ॥ ਜਲਮਿ ਜਬਰਿ ਕਰਿ ਤਾਹੇ ਸਤਾਵੈ॥ ਧਰਮ ਨਸਟ ਕਰ ਤੁਰਕ ਬਨਾਵੈ॥ 182 ਕੋਇ ਨਾ ਇਨਿ ਕੀ ਕਰੈ ਸਹਾਇ॥ ਅੰਤ ਪਾਂਡੇ ਗੁਰ ਸਰਨੀ ਆਇ॥ ਰੋਇ ਰੋਇ ਤਿਨਿ ਬ੍ਰਿਥਾ ਸੁਨਾਈ॥ ਗੁਰੂ ਤੁਗ ਬਹਾਦਰ ਸਿਉਂ ਚੀਤ ਲਗਾਈ॥ 183 ਤਿਨਹਿ ਗੁਰੂ ਪੁਨ ਧੀਰਜ ਦੀਨਾ॥ ਸ੍ਰੋਟ ਪੀਏ ਗੋ ਇਹੁ ਕਮੀਨਾ॥ ਅਬਿ ਇਸ ਕੀ ਹਮ ਪਿਆਸ ਮਿਟਾਵੈ॥ ਸੁਰਿਪੁਰ ਜਾਵਹਿ ਧਰਮ ਬਚਾਵੈ॥ 184 Gurmukh Singh ed., *Sanchee Das GurKatha Krit Kavi Kankan*, 55.

¹⁸⁷ Naina Devi is a *sakti pitha* (seat of the goddess) and is located in the hills outside of Anandpur.

groups), the Guru establishes his authority over dissenting groups within the community. While there is a reference to the *panj mel* in other texts of the period, Kankan's account appears to be the first to specify the five by name. After establishing his authority in the Khalsa, the manuscript version concludes with a tribute to the growing strength of the *panth*. The printed edition of *Das GurKatha* extends the narrative past the Khalsa and details various battles fought by the Guru until his subsequent death at Nanderh. At the end of this version, Kankan refers to the uprooting of Anandpur and the destruction of the Guru's *darbar*, and his own helpless state in Lahore. Given this final verse in the printed edition, it appears that he completed his composition bereft of any patron.¹⁸⁸

With a manuscript date of 1709, Sevadas' *Parchi Patshahi Dasvin Ki* is a text that presents the life and teachings of the Gurus in the form of fifty vignettes (*parchi*), the vast majority of which focus on Guru Gobind Singh.¹⁸⁹ The vignettes in this collection revolve around the narration of events in the lives of the Gurus' with an eye towards the clarification of points related to doctrine and practice; in essence, they function as instructive stories for the Sikhs of the Gurus. In current scholarship, authorship is attributed to Sevadas 'Udasi,' although the epithet

¹⁸⁸ The fact that he is writing without a patron helpless in Lahore suggests that this text would have been written before the rise of Banda Singh Bahadur because otherwise he would have likely completed his text at Mukhlispur with Banda's support.

¹⁸⁹ Thirty eight episodes focus on Guru Gobind Singh, while the remaining twelve are distributed rather evenly amongst the other nine Gurus.

‘Udasi’ does not appear in the manuscript.¹⁹⁰ The literal meaning of the term *udasi* is “detached, melancholy,” but as an epithet it refers to the tradition of asceticism initiated by Guru Nanak’s eldest son, Srichand. While scholars argue that the Udasis achieved prominence beginning in the seventeenth century, Harjot Oberoi argues that the Udasis were a counterpoint to Khalsa identity from the eighteenth century onwards. Writing of the heterodox doctrines espoused by the Udasis he argues that the Udasis did not accept the “orthodox” line of succession from Guru Nanak to Guru Gobind Singh.¹⁹¹ Given the absence of ‘Udasi’ as an epithet for Sevadas in early manuscripts, however, it is unclear whether or not he in fact shared any affiliation with the Udasis. Also, an Udasi identity for Sevadas is questionable given the several instances in his text where Udasi figures such as Srichand express their acquiescence and acceptance of the “orthodox” line of succession from Guru Nanak to Guru Gobind Singh.¹⁹² The first mention of Guru Gobind Singh occurs in the twelfth episode when news of his father’s execution

¹⁹⁰ In his introduction to the printed edition of *Parchi Patshahi Dasvin Ki*, Padam indicates that there were several Sevadas’ from the period but is unable to specify which one in particular would have written this composition. See Piara Singh Padam, ed., *Parchi Patshahi Dasvin Ki* (Patiala: Kala Mandir, 1988), 9-10.

¹⁹¹ Harjot Oberoi, *The Construction of Religious Boundaries*, 80.

¹⁹² In the second episode, reference is made to the possible successors of Guru Nanak and it is clear that Guru Angad was more virtuous than either of the Gurus’ sons – Srichand and Lakhmidas; in the fourth episode of the text, Srichand compliments the fourth Guru, Guru Ram Das, and concurs with his ascension to the position of Guru. See Piara Singh Padam, ed., *Parchi Patshahi Dasvin Ki*, 24 & 30.

arrives in Anandpur.¹⁹³ Similar to Kankan's account, Sevasdas' episodic treatment of Guru Gobind Singh's life begins against the backdrop of his father's unjust death. Decrying the ignominy of the Turks, the Guru promises to destroy the Turks and avenge his father's death.¹⁹⁴ However, from that point forward until the final vignette narrating the Guru's death, the text does not move in chronological order but rather jumps around in time. It is the assumption of events that fills the pages of text rather than their direct narration. For example, Sevasdas mentions the establishment of the Khalsa in different places, but does not linger on the details of the events. The vignettes are not very long and appear to be structured around the expectation of a listener and/or reader already conversant with key details. The purpose of narration is not to provide detail but to relate the essence of any given event.

These four accounts, written by different authors in various genres, represent both an inheritance and innovation within the literary traditions of the Sikh corpus. By way of inheritance, all of these accounts praise the life of the Guru and commit that praise to writing. Apart from the canonical *Guru Granth*,

¹⁹³ In Sevasdas' text the status of Guru Tegh Bahadur as the "pir of the Hindus" is related to the Aurangzeb. Interestingly, in this account of Guru Tegh Bahadur's execution, he was killed not by the Emperor's men, but by a pious Sikh who was jailed with him. Piara Singh Padam ed., *Parchi Patshahi Dasvin Ki*, 46-51.

¹⁹⁴ ਗੁਰੂ ਤੁਗ ਬਹਾਦਰ ਜੀ ਕਾ ਕਾਰਨ ਹੋਆ ਦੇਖਿ ਕਰ ਸਿਖ ਲਗੇ ਰੁਦਨ ਕਰਨ। ਹੁਕਮ ਹੋਆ ਭਾਈ, ਸਿਖੋ! ਗੁਰੂ ਜੀ ਕਉ ਤਉ ਸੰਸਾਰ ਕਾ ਜੀਵਨ ਮਰਨ ਸਮਾਨ ਥਾ। ਜੀਵਦਿਆਂ ਭੀ ਉਹ ਨਿਰੰਕਾਰ ਸਰੂਪ ਥੇ ਅਰ ਸਰੀਰ ਕੇ ਛੁਟਿਆਂ ਭੀ ਉਹ ਨਿਰੰਕਾਰ ਸਰੂਪ ਹਰਿ। ਉਨ ਕਉ ਕੋਊ ਮੂਆ ਜਾਨ ਕਰਿ ਰੋਵੈਗਾ ਸੋ ਭੁਲੈਗਾ। ਤਾਂ ਸਿਖਾਂ ਗੁਰੂ ਕੇ ਬਚਨ ਪਾਇ ਰੁਦਨ ਛਡਿ ਦਿਤਾ। ਫਿਰ ਹੁਕਮ ਹੋਆ ਤੁਰਕਾ ਕਉ ਕੂੜਾ ਕਰਿ ਨਾਰਣਾ ਥਾ। ਸੋ ਅਬ ਤੁਰਕ ਕੂੜੇ ਹੋਇ ਚੁਕੇ ਹਰਿ। ਤੁਰਕੋਂ ਕਉ ਮਾਰਨ ਕੀ ਵਾਰੀ ਹਮਾਰੀ ਆਈ ਹੈ। Piara Singh Padam ed., *Parchi Patshahi Dasvin Ki*, 52.

the earliest compositions narrating a story of the Guru's life, and by extension his praise, is the *Puratan Janam Sakhi*. Following the *Puratan Janam Sakhi*, we have the compositions of bards who also sang the praise of the Guru. These four accounts emerge out of this context and continue written traditions that narrate the Guru's life and praise. By way of innovation, however, these traditions move beyond the genre of the *janam sakhi* and *var* and write in new genres such as *gursobha*, *rahitnama*, *parchi*, and *katha*. In addition to a wide variety of literary genres, new literary meters are used. *Apani Katha* and *Sri Gursobha* use meters such as *bhujang*, *rasawal*, *naraj*, *padhari*, *totak*, *tomar*, *chachari*, *charpat*, and *madhubhar* that were not used in early devotional poetry.¹⁹⁵ The vantage point of time also caused innovations within the literary production of this period. Beginning with the sixth Guru through the eighth Guru, covering a period of almost sixty years, there is an absence of any writings by the Gurus themselves. This gap is filled during the short tenure of Guru Tegh Bahadur with the result that from the death of Guru Arjan in 1606 until the death of Guru Gobind Singh in 1708, the only definitive compositions of any Guru that we possess are from the eleven year tenure of Guru Tegh Bahadur. If we assume that Guru Nanak began to write his compositions in the early sixteenth century we are faced with an uneven set of writing by the Gurus' over the course of two centuries: the first century of the tradition witnessed the writing of every Guru from Nanak to Arjan

¹⁹⁵ Surjit Hans, *A Reconstruction of Sikh History from Sikh Literature*, 233.

while the second century of the tradition witnessed the writing of only one Guru, Guru Tegh Bahadur. Emerging out of this context of relatively little literary production, whether canonical or non canonical, the literature of Guru Gobind Singh's period of necessity developed in new directions incorporating new genres and meters.

Another innovation of this period is reflected in the development of a highly differentiated court bolstered by an increase in resources unparalleled in the lives of the earlier Gurus. The increase in resources and scope resulted in a greater proliferation of literature, especially an increased differentiation between the canonical *Guru Granth* and other non-canonical literature. Although the Gurus' writings have always constituted the central core of the Sikh literary corpus, prior to the period of Guru Gobind Singh we do not have such a vast and weighty Sikh literary corpus. During Guru Gobind Singh's time, previously existing literature such as the *Guru Granth* and its commentarial literature and *janam sakhi* literature, is bolstered by the emergence of new collections of *rahit* literature and court poetry preserved in massive anthologies like the *Dasam Granth* and *Sarab Loh Granth*. And finally, authors of the period such as Sainapati, Kankan, and Sevasdas were writing in the wake of the death of the Guru and the dissolution of the human office of the Guru. In other words, they completed their accounts within a context where there was no living human Guru.

From their perspective then these authors were able to sum up the life and legacy of *all* of the Gurus in a way previously unimaginable.

Discursive Consensus and Competition

As the eighteenth century progressed, several accounts of Guru Gobind Singh's life emerge that are all, rather awkwardly, situated within the *gurbilas* genre – Koer Singh's *Gurbilas Patshahi Dasvin*, "Gurbilas of the Tenth Emperor," (1751), Sukha Singh's *Gurbilas Dasvin Patshahi*, "Gurbilas of the Tenth Emperor," (1797), and Kesar Singh Chibber's *Bansavalinama Dasan Patshah Ka*, "Genealogy of the Tenth Emperor," (1769). Written at a remove of almost a half a century, these later accounts are written in contexts far different than during the time of the Guru. First, they are the first major written narratives to emerge in the Sikh literary corpus without the presence of a living human Guru. Second, from the time of Guru Gobind Singh's death and Banda Singh Bahadur's execution in Delhi to the eventual raising of the *nishan* at Lahore by the triumphant leaders of the Sikh *misls* (regiments), the mid eighteenth century witnessed the dispersal of the Sikh community throughout the Punjab and the devastating raids of Nadir Shah and Ahmed Shah Durrani. Far from a period of stability, the early to mid eighteenth century, was a period of great tumult within northern India in general and the Sikh community in particular. During this time even the *Darbar Sahib* (Golden Temple) in Amritsar was repeatedly attacked. Given the historical contingency of these fifty years it is not surprising that there

are significant breaks in the literary production of Sikh texts. In her article, “Redemptive Pasts and Imperiled Futures,” Dhavan argues that whereas the earlier *gurbilas* narratives of Sainapati and Chaupa Singh display “wide variations,” the *gurbilas* narratives post 1750 “do not show wide variations in the narrative episodes related to the tenth Guru’s life, indicating that by the last half of the eighteenth century a uniform version of Guru Gobind Singh’s life was beginning to emerge.”¹⁹⁶

While it is outside the scope of this dissertation to comment on Sikh literature produced from the mid-eighteenth century forward, in stark contrast to Dhavan’s argument regarding the lack of consensus amongst the early *gurbilas* literature regarding the events and interpretation of Guru Gobind Singh’s life and legacy, a close reading of the *Apani Katha*, *Sri Gursobha*, *Das GurKatha*, and *Parchi Patshahi Dasvin Ki*, reveals the emergence of a relatively “uniform version” of the Guru’s life within the opening decade of the eighteenth century. We do not have to wait until the end of the eighteenth century to find agreement regarding the structure and import of the Guru’s life. The convergence in these circulating versions of the Guru’s life occurs during his own lifetime, and in some instances, the Guru himself would have been listening to and/or reading his own

¹⁹⁶ Purnima Dhavan, “A Normative Heterodoxy? Representing and Transmitting Khalsa Tradition in the later *Gurbilas* Texts” Paper presented on November 14, 2009 at the conference Expanding Horizons: Sikh Studies at the turn of the 21st century. Dhavan’s argument is based on a misreading of the *Sri Gursobha* and the *Chaupa Singh Rahitnama*, two texts that actually converge in their accounts of the Guru’s life.

life story. In many ways, he was dictating his literary legacy during his own life. Whether that was manifest in his decision not to write under the signature of ‘Nanak’ or his decision to terminate the office of the living human Guru, Guru Gobind Singh was acutely aware of his position and concerned with its future. Whereas, scholars such as McLeod, Oberoi, Deol, and Dhavan employ the language of “rupture” and “contradiction” to explain the establishment of the Khalsa, it is clear from these other contemporary accounts that the writers themselves saw no dissonance between the life and activities of Guru Gobind Singh and any of the other Gurus.¹⁹⁷ In order to debunk scholarly claims that Guru Gobind Singh’s life and legacy was marked more by contention than consensus, the remainder of this chapter will examine these four contemporary accounts of the Guru’s life and present the “uniform vision” of his life that emerged within the opening decade of the eighteenth century. The discussion will focus on the similarities and dissimilarities in how these four accounts present the key events in the life of Guru Gobind Singh with an eye towards examining how

¹⁹⁷ Jeevan Deol argues that the “corpus of contemporary or near contemporary sources about the creation of the Khalsa is very small” in his article “Eighteenth Century Khalsa Identity: Discourse, Praxis, and Narrative,” 26. If we add the account found in the *Chaupa Singh Rahitnama* to the *Apani Katha*, *Sri Gursobha*, *Das GurKatha*, and *Parchi Patshahi Dasvin Ki*, we are in possession of five contemporary sources that provide information on the life and legacy of Guru Gobind Singh. The availability of these five sources challenges Deol claims that we possess an inadequate or limited amount of source material from this period; the archive for this period exist.

these authors described the relationship between Guru Gobind Singh and the previous Gurus and between the Guru and his Sikhs.¹⁹⁸

The Line of Gurus

The account of the Guru's birth in the *Apani Katha* is limited to a brief reference to his birth at Patna, after the Guru was commanded by Prabhu to take birth in the world.¹⁹⁹ Describing the birth and education of the Guru in three verses, the poet immediately shifts to the responsibilities assumed by the Guru upon his father's departure from the world.²⁰⁰ Bracketing the issue of the Guru's birth altogether, in the *Sri Gursobha*, *Das GurKatha*, and *Parchi Patshahi Dasvin*

¹⁹⁸ For the full text of the *Sri Gursobha* see Appendix B, and for translation of Kankan's text please see Ami P. Shah, "The Leader of the Sodhis: Kavi Kankan's Account of Guru Gobind Singh's Life," in *Guru Gobind Singh: New Sources, New Voices*, ed. Gurinder Singh Mann (forthcoming). There are good English translations available of *Apani Katha* and *Parchi Patshahi Dasvin Ki*. For a translation of *Apani Katha* see Jodh Singh and Dharam Singh ed., *Sri Dasam Granth Sahib Text and Translation, Volume I* (Patiala: Heritage Publications, 1999), 151-205. For *Parchi Patshahi Dasvin Ki*, see Kharak Singh and Gurtej Singh, *Episodes From Lives of Gurus* (Chandigarh: Institute of Sikh Studies).

¹⁹⁹ This episode is quite similar to the account provided in the *Chaupa Singh Rahitnama* which reads: ਏਹੁ ਜੋ ਪੂਰਨ ਪੁਰਖ ਜੀ ਕਲਜੁਗ ਵਿਚ ਅਉਤਾਰ ਲਿਆ ਹੈ ਆਗਿਆ ਸ੍ਰੀ ਅਕਾਲ ਪੁਰਖ ਜੀ ਦੀ ਨਾਲਿ ਗੁਰੂ ਹਰਿਗੋਬਿੰਦ ਸੋਢੀ ਤੇਗ ਦੇਗ ਦੇ ਧਨੀ ਤਿਸ ਦੇ ਘਰ ਪੋਤਰੇ ਹੋਇ ਉਤਰੇ। ਹੇਮ ਕੁੰਡ ਪਰਬਤ ਸੁਮੇਰ ਉਪਰੇ ਤਪ ਕਰਦੇ ਆਏ। ਗੁਰੂ ਤੇਗ ਬਹਾਦਰ ਜੀ ਦੇ ਘਰ ਸੁਤ ਹੁਇ ਜਨਮੇ। ਪਟਨਾ ਨਗਰ ਵਿਖੇ ਸੰਮਤ 1718 ਮਾਗ ਦੇ ਮਹੀਨੇ। ਕ੍ਰਿਸਨ ਪਖ ਬਿਤ ਸਤਮੀ। ਰਵਿਵਾਰ ਪਖੁ ਨਿਛਤ੍ਰ ਪਹਿਰ ਰਾਤ ਰਹਿਦੀ।

157 That Puran Purakh Ji incarnated in the Kaliyug and at the behest of Sri Akal Ji, he descended as the grandson of Guru Hargobind Sodhi, master of *tegh* and *deg*. Practicing austerities atop Mount Sumer at Hemkund, he arrived. He was born in the house of Guru Tegh Bahadur as his son. Born in the city of Patna in 1661 [1718 Sammat] during the month of Magh [January-February]. On the dark night of the seventh. On Sunday during the night constellation. 157

²⁰⁰ ਚੋਪਈ। ਮੁਰਪਿਤ ਪੂਰਬਿ ਕਿਯਸਿ ਪਯਾਨਾ। ਭਾਂਤਿ ਭਾਂਤਿ ਕੇ ਤੀਰਥਿ ਨੁਾਨਾ। ਜਬ ਹੀ ਜਾਤਿ ਤ੍ਰਿਬੇਣੀ ਭਏ। ਪੁਣ ਦਾਨ ਦਿਨ ਕਰਤ ਬਿਤਏ। 1। ਤਹੀ ਪ੍ਰਕਾਸ ਹਮਾਰਾ ਭਣੇ। ਪਟਨਾ ਸ਼ਹਰ ਬਿਖੈ ਭਵ ਲਯੋ। ਮਦ੍ਰ ਦੇਸ ਹਮ ਕੋ ਲੇ ਆਏ। ਭਾਤਿ ਭਾਤਿ ਦਾਈਅਨ ਦੁਲਰਾਏ। 2। ਕੀਨੀ ਅਨਿਕ ਭਾਤਿ ਤਨ ਰੱਛਾ। ਦੀਨੀ ਭਾਂਤਿ ਭਾਂਤਿ ਕੀ ਸਿੱਛਾ। ਜਬ ਹਮ ਧਰਮ ਕਰਮ ਮੋ ਆਇ। ਦੇਵਲੋਕਿ ਤਬ ਪਿਤਾ ਸਿਧਾਏ। 3।

Ki, the narration begins with the Guru as a young man after having suffered the loss of his father. Although none of these accounts provides a date for his birth, the *Chaupa Singh Rahitnama* (1700) provides a date of 1661. Currently however the scholarly consensus has settled upon 1666 as the Guru's birthdate even though the early evidence for this date is slim. In addition to the *Chaupa Singh Rahitnama*, three other eighteenth century sources – Kesar Singh Chibber, *Bansavalinama* (1769), Sarup Das Bhalla, *Mahima Prakash* (1776), and Sarup Singh Kaushish, *Guru Kian Sakhian* (1797) – that corroborate 1661 as the Guru's birthdate.²⁰¹ The first text to record the 1666 birthdate for the Guru appears in Sukha Singh's *Gurbilas Patshahi Dasvin* (1797). While the difference between 1661 and 1666 may seem inconsequential, it actually has profound consequences for how we think about the progression of Guru Gobind Singh's life. If he was born in 1661 then he would have been fourteen instead of nine years of age at the time of his father's death. There is no mention of his inordinately young age the time of his father's death and because there is a model for the *bal guru* (child guru) with the eighth Guru, Guru Har Krishan, this silence is noteworthy. The date of the Guru's birth has yet to be definitively settled, but it does raise questions regarding how we use the multiple sources available to us from within the tradition.

²⁰¹ G.S. Mann, "Sources for the Study of Guru Gobind Singh's Life and Times," 261.

Irrespective of the Guru's birthdate as 1661 or 1666, all of these texts situate the Guru within the lineage of the previous nine Gurus. In the eleven verses prior to the beginning of the *Apani Katha* the succession of Guruship from Guru Nanak to Guru Tegh Bahadur is presented without any reference to any dissenting family members who tried to establish themselves as figures of authority after having been consciously passed over in succession to the guruship. Although the other three accounts mention the various contestants for guruship, they also affirm the authority that runs through the ten Gurus from Guru Nanak to Guru Gobind Singh. While the *Sri Gursobha* makes reference to the *panj mel*, the first articulation of the specific groups that comprise the *panj mel* is made in Kankan's *Das GurKatha*. Sevasdas' *Parchi Patshahi Dasvin Ki* is another text that affirms the authority of the ten Gurus while also including contests between dissenting claimants to the office of the Guru. In two accounts, Sevasdas highlights both the inability of the sons of Guru Nanak to claim the mantle of their father. Thus, while situating the life of Guru Gobind Singh within the lineage of the previous nine Gurus, Sainapati, Kankan, and Sevasdas acknowledge the presence of competing lines of authority in the community. However, whereas all of the texts from this period agree on the succession of Gurus between Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh, some scholars have downplayed this consensus by referring to this conception of the ten Gurus as "orthodox" as opposed to mainstream. In

his book *The Construction of Religious Boundaries*, Harjot Oberoi also uses the language of “orthodox” to describe the lineage of the ten Gurus. He writes,

The exact standing of a guru in Sikh history has been a perennial problem and source of considerable discord. While Guru Nanak, the initiator of the tradition, was able to ensure the continuity of his teachings by choosing a successor to his position, this measure also paved the way for endemic controversy among future contenders. Successions are rarely peaceful when the inheritance of resources is at stake. Although the Sikh orthodox tradition takes particular pride in proclaiming a distinct line of nine sacred masters succeeding Nanak, it is remarkable that none of them attained the rank uncontested: there was always a melee of rival claimants to their august seat of religious authority. Even when Gobind Singh, the tenth guru, is said to have put an end to the institution of human gurus, there was no dearth of candidates to go on claiming the guruship. From the orthodox viewpoint such claims were heretical and destructive of communal solidarity, but all the same they received ample public support.²⁰²

This reference to the “orthodox” viewpoint appears to be informed by the scholarly estimations discussed earlier of Guru Gobind Singh’s Khalsa as a distinct and exclusive community that not only displaced the claims of splinter groups in the community but also separated the *Nanakpanth* from the Khalsa. Oberoi does not identify the sources of “ample public support” for this position, but simply claims it as fact. For scholars like Oberoi, the Khalsa identity of Guru Gobind Singh is in direct conflict with his vision of Sanatan Sikhism in which the

²⁰² Harjot Oberoi, *The Construction of Religious Boundaries*, 316.

transmission of the Sikh tradition was maintained by a plethora of figures – Udasis, Nirmalas, Gianis, Dhadhis, Rababis, etc. According to Oberoi, the Sikh tradition prior to the colonial period was a non-mediated experience of religious fluidity that was not mediated by a guru lineage, but by guru lineages.

In the same vein as Oberoi's argument regarding the place of the ten Gurus in the "Sikh orthodox tradition," Anne Murphy describes the invocation of the ten Gurus in Sainapati's text as follows, "The typical invocation of the Guru at the beginning of the text, followed by a conventional list of the Gurus as accepted by orthodox Sikh tradition, clearly places the text within that tradition."²⁰³ By arguing that the *Sri Gursobha*'s placement of Guru Gobind Singh within the lineage of the nine Gurus indicates an "orthodoxy," Murphy seems to insinuate that "that tradition" is somehow just one of many traditions circulating with regards to the organization of authority within the community. In order to counter the claims of this "orthodox" list, she argues that there were splinter groups in the eighteenth century vying for authority, but fails to mention who those groups were.

In comparison to the ten Gurus of the tradition, the evidence from the seventeenth century onwards suggests that the resources possessed and authority garnered by the *panj mel* would have been rather marginal. Thus, rather than referring to the invocation of the ten Gurus in the opening chapters of *Sri*

²⁰³ Anne Murphy, "History in the Sikh Past," 351.

Gursobha as “orthodox” it would be more appropriate to refer to it as the “mainstream” position because *every* text from this period affirms the centrality and authority of those ten Gurus.²⁰⁴ In the literature of Guru Gobind Singh’s period, other dissenting groups are mentioned, but they are given no place of importance or consequence. Just as scholars have focused on the dislocation in the Khatri community subsequent to the establishment of the Khalsa, and ignored the ultimate resolution of the crisis, they also problematize the agreement within the community with regards to the line of the Gurus without providing evidence of other viable guru lineages. The argument of this chapter is not premised upon the total hegemony of these contemporary accounts in representing the period of Guru Gobind Singh, but upon the general consensus with regards to key developments during the period. Is total hegemony ever possible? I think most reasonable people would agree that it is neither possible nor desirable. These contemporary accounts of the Guru’s life present a remarkably coherent vision of the Sikh tradition, but they are not univocal.

Belonging to the Guru

The question of identity and belonging is central to the literature of this period. Whereas many scholars highlight the colonial experience as the formative intervention of the modern Sikh tradition, the fact remains that issues of identity

²⁰⁴ When we juxtapose this use of “orthodox” with the discussion in Chapter Two regarding the perpetually “nascent” nature of the *panth*, we are left with a contradiction in terms. How can the tradition be “nascent” and “orthodox” at the same time?

and community have been central to the tradition since its inception. As scholars in the field of Sikh Studies, we have been able to follow these discussions through our access to its extant and extensive literary record. Because these written sources are the primary route through which we can reconstruct Guru Gobind Singh's period, the issue of dating these texts assumes paramount importance. For example, as discussed in Chapter One, the dating of the *rahit* literature has been subject to substantive disagreement amongst scholars. Whereas most scholars argue that it does not emerge until the mid-eighteenth century, manuscript evidence indicates that it develops at Anandpur beginning in the last decade of the seventeenth century. Centrally concerned with the proper behavior of individuals in particular and the community at large, this body of literature is fundamentally occupied with the concerns of religious identity and community formation and emerges during the Guru's lifetime. Nowhere are these concerns more evident than in these four accounts of the establishment of the Khalsa.

With a composition date of 1697, the *Apani Katha* is chronologically prior to the founding of the Khalsa hence its narrative silence. However, although it does not chronicle the establishment of the Khalsa, it does underscore the unique religious duty and dispensation of Guru Gobind Singh to establish and protect *dharam* (*dharam chalauna* and *dharam rakhna*). Whether it is through battle or the company of the virtuous, the *Apani Katha* continually underscores the protection that the Guru provides to those who direct their love and loyalty

towards him.²⁰⁵ By continually stressing the importance of loyalty to the Guru, the *Apani Katha* makes reference to both internal and external challenges without explicitly mentioning any one group by name.²⁰⁶ Though the treachery of the Mughals and Rajput hill chiefs is highlighted, there is no reference to the *panj mel* that is a feature of the accounts found in *Sri Gursobha*, *Das GurKatha*, and *Parchi Patshahi Dasvin Ki*. Ultimately, in the *Apani Katha*, identity and belonging are mediated through loyalty to Guru Gobind Singh, whose own succession is mediated through the legacy of the previous nine Gurus.

Building on the ideas of establishing and protecting *dharam*, and the single minded devotion and loyalty to the Guru as expressed in the *Apani Katha*, Sainapati's account is one of the earliest accounts that details the establishment of the Khalsa. As discussed in Chapter Two, Sainapati's vision of the Khalsa encompasses the entire community and is specific in its injunctions to avoid the evil company (*kusangat*) of the *panj mel*. Sainapati is the one of the first writers to emphasize the doctrine of *gurkhalsha*, the single identity of the Guru and the Khalsa. By banishing communion with the *panj mel*, Sainapati's account appears

²⁰⁵ ਸਰਬਕਾਲ ਸਭ ਸਾਧ ਉਬਾਰੇ। ਦੁਖੁ ਚੈ ਕੈ ਦੋਖੀ ਸਭ ਮਾਰੇ। ਅਦਭੁਤਿ ਗਤਿ ਭਗਤਨ ਦਿਖਰਾਈ। ਸਭ ਸੰਕਟ ਤੇ ਲਏ ਬਚਾਈ। 1। ਸਭ ਸੰਕਟ ਤੇ ਸੰਤ ਬਚਾਏ। ਸਭ ਕੰਟਕ ਕੰਟਕ ਜਿਮ ਘਾਏ। ਦਾਸ ਜਾਨ ਮੁਰਿ ਕਰੀ ਸਹਾਇ। ਆਪ ਹਾਥੁ ਚੈ ਲਯੋ ਬਚਾਇ। 2।

²⁰⁶ ਜੇ ਅਪਨੇ ਗੁਰ ਤੇ ਮੁਖ ਫਿਰ ਹੈ। ਇਹਾਂ ਊਹਾਂ ਤਿਨ ਕੇ ਗ੍ਰਿਹਿ ਗਿਰਿ ਹੈ। ਇਹਾ ਉਪਹਾਸ ਨ ਸੁਰਪੁਰਿ ਬਾਸਾ। ਸਭ ਬਾਤਨ ਤੇ ਰਹੈ ਨਿਰਾਸਾ। 5। ਦੂਖ ਭੂਖ ਤਿਨ ਕੋ ਰਹੈ ਲਾਗੀ। ਸੰਤ ਸੇਵ ਤੇ ਜੋ ਹੈ ਤਿਆਗੀ। ਜਗਤ ਬਿਖੈ ਕੋਈ ਕਾਮ ਨ ਸਾਰ ਹੀ। ਅਮਤਹਿ ਕੁੰਡ ਨਰਕ ਕੀ ਪਰ ਹੀ। 6। ਤਿਨ ਕੋ ਸਦਾ ਜਗਤਿ ਉਪਹਾਸਾ। ਅਮਤਹਿ ਕੁੰਡ ਨਰਕ ਕੀ ਬਾਸਾ। ਗੁਰ ਪਗ ਤੇ ਜੇ ਬੇਮੁਖ ਸਿਧਾਰੇ। ਈਹਾ ਊਹਾ ਤਿਨ ਕੇ ਨੁਖ ਕਾਰੇ। 7।

to place greatest emphasis on the internal challenges to the Guru's authority. Although Sainapati's account does not highlight the external treachery of the Rajputs and Mughals as the primary motivation behind the Khalsa's establishment, it is clear as the *Sri Gursobha* progresses that the Khalsa's ascendancy will be complete once they triumph over the kings and armies that threaten them.²⁰⁷ While the revenge motive is not as highly developed in Sainapati's account, upon a close reading of the text, it is clear that the Khalsa is the only community through which both religious liberation and political supremacy can be achieved. With the death of the Guru at Nanderh, Sainapati defiantly announces that the community will triumph in the world through their collective and unified action.

In "Redemptive Pasts and Imperiled Futures," Purnima Dhavan argues that Sainapati's account of the Khalsa focuses more on internal purification the *panth* and that it is not until mid eighteenth century *gurbilas* texts that the Guru's struggle with the Mughal state comes into greater focus. While it is true that there is no explicit mention of political struggle in Sainapati's account of the establishment of the Khalsa, those concerns acquire a greater profile as the text progresses. However, we do not have to wait until the mid eighteenth century for the conflict between the Guru and the Mughals to come into greater focus. In both the *Das GurKatha* and *Parchi Patshahi Dasvin Ki*, the desire to take revenge

²⁰⁷ See Appendix B, Chapter Nineteen.

upon the Turks for the unjust death of his father, Guru Tegh Bahadur, is highlighted as the primary motivation of the Guru in establishing the Khalsa. After securing his father's remains from Delhi and conducting his final rites, in Kankan's account the Guru gathers the *sangat* and tells them,

I will perform a *puja* to the Devi and exact revenge for my gather.

I will establish my own *panth*, and people will know this to be true.

193

I will establish a *panth* that everyone will know.

It will be an irritant in the eyes of Hindus and Muslims. 194

It will aggravate both of them, they will not be able to rest.

Neither Hindu nor Muslim will have any peace.¹⁹⁵²⁰⁸

After concluding the *homa* which ends with an exchange between the Guru and the goddess, and the Guru goes on to establish the Khalsa,

Establishing the *panth*, five Sikhs were summoned.

The Guru administered *pahul* to them, and sprinkled it on their heads.

213

The Guru stated that there should be no contact with those five.

Renounce bad deeds and neer let a good deed go undone. 214

Who are these five? I will tell you.

Minas, *Masands*, and those who practice *bhaddar*. 215

Dhirmalias, and *kurdimar*, meeting them is of no avail.

Abandoning these five, enjoy your activities in the world. 216

Just as the Guru gave *pahul* he received it from them in a similar

²⁰⁸ See Ami P. Shah, "The Leader of the Sodhis: Kavi Kankan's Account of Guru Gobind Singh's Life," in *Guru Gobind Singh: New Voices, New Sources*, ed. Gurinder Singh Mann (*forthcoming*).

manner.

You yourself became their Sikh, such a deed was performed by the
Guru. 217

Vahiguru made this statement. He gave them the name *gurkhalsa*.

You are mine and I am yours. Our guru is one.²¹⁸²⁰⁹

In Kankan's account, the Guru is equally motivated to address the external menace of the Turks, i.e. Mughals, and the internal challenges presented by the *panj mel*. In synchronicity with Sainapati's emphasis on the shared identity of the Guru and the Khalsa, Kankan underlines the unity of the *gurkhalsa* as well. The identity of the *gurkhalsa* is further underscored by their deep sense of belonging; the fate of the Guru and the Sikhs is inseparable. In contrast to the *Sri Gursobha* and *Das GurKatha's* presentation of the founding of the Khalsa as a specific event, the *Parchi Patshahi Dasvin Ki account* does not detail the specifics of its founding but rather mentions its founding in passing and assumes its existence. However, the desire for revenge appears to motivate its founding. In the thirteenth episode, *Sevadas* narrates the Guru's intentions,

The death of Guru Tegh Bahadur deeply distressed the Sikhs who began to cry inconsolably. The Guru related the following wisdom that the Guru understood life and death to be synonymous. In life he was faultless and in leaving behind his body he remained peerless. Knowing this, whoever mourns his death is foolish. Hearing these words of the Gurus, the Sikhs ceased crying. Then the Guru said, it is necessary to end the deception of the Turks, and this has been done Now it is our turn to exterminate the

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

Turks. They perpetrated such injustice against Guru Tegh Bahadur when he had not usurped their land or engaged in any bloodshed. Committing this injustice in the name of their *panth* they have committed an immoral act. They have only harmed themselves by committing such acts against such a wise man. Guru Tegh Bahadur exposed the lies of the Turks and now I will destroy them.²¹⁰

Kankan mentions the Guru's performance of a *homa* to establish of the Khalsa, but pervades no specific detail about the event. Unlike Sainapati and Kankan, Sevadas does not mention the establishment of the Khalsa or the doctrine of *gurkhalsa*. In keeping with the episodic nature of his text, the details of Khalsa identity are slowly revealed in snippets dispersed in various episodes. For example, the importance of maintaining long hair and bearing arms is mentioned in an episode after the Guru abandons Anandpur and is travelling through the Lakhi jungle. As a loosely pieced together series of vignettes, *Sevadas'* account

²¹⁰ ਗੁਰੂ ਤੇਗ ਬਹਾਦਰ ਜੀ ਕਾ ਕਾਰਨ ਹੋਆ ਦੇਖਿ ਕਰ ਸਿਖ ਲਗੀ ਰੁਦਨ ਕਰਨ। ਹੁਕਮ ਹੋਆ ਭਾਈ, ਸਿਖੋ। ਗੁਰੂ ਜੀ ਕਉ ਤਉ ਸੰਸਾਰ ਕਾ ਜੀਵਨ ਮਰਨ ਸਮਾਨ ਥਾ। ਜੀਵਦਿਆਂ ਭੀ ਉਹ ਨਿਰੰਕਾਰ ਸਰੂਪ ਥੇ ਅਰ ਸਰੀਰ ਕੇ ਛੁਟਿਆ ਭੀ ਉਹ ਨਿਰੰਕਾਰ ਸਰੂਪ ਹਹਿ। ਉਨ ਕਉ ਕੋਊ ਮੂਆ ਜਾਨ ਕਰਿ ਰੋਗੈਗਾ ਸੋ ਭੁਲੈਗਾ। ਤਾਂ ਸਿਖਾਂ ਗੁਰੂ ਕੇ ਬਚਨ ਪਾਇ ਰੁਦਨ ਛਡਿ ਦਿਤਾ। ਫਿਰ ਹੁਕਮ ਹੋਆ ਤੁਰਕਾਂ ਕਉ ਕੂੜਾ ਕਰਿ ਮਾਰਣਾ ਥਾ। ਸੋ ਅਬ ਤੁਰਕ ਕੂੜੇ ਹੋਇ ਚੁਕੇ ਹਹਿ। ਤੁਰਕੇ ਕੋ ਮਾਰਨੇ ਕੀ ਵਾਰੀ ਹਮਾਰੀ ਆਈ ਹੈ। ਗੁਰੂ ਤੇਗ ਬਹਾਦਰ ਸਾਥ ਜੋ ਉਨਹੁ ਨੇ ਤਾਦੀ ਕੀਨੀ ਹੈ ਗੁਰੂ ਉਨਹਾਂ ਕਾ ਕੋਈ ਦਸੁ ਨ ਮਾਰਿਆ ਥਾ, ਕੋਊ ਉਨਕਾ ਖੁਨ ਨਹੀਂ ਕੀਆ ਥਾ। ਅਪਨੇ ਪੰਥ ਕਾ ਪੱਖ ਕਰ ਕੇ ਉਨਹੁ ਨੇ ਤਾਦੀ ਕੀਤੀ ਹੈ ਸੋ ਉਨਹੁ ਨੇ ਇਹ ਅਨੀਤ ਕੀਨੀ ਹੈ। ਇਸੀ ਤੇ ਤੁਰਕ ਕੂੜੇ ਹੋਇ ਚੁਕੇ ਹੈ। ਓਸੇ ਗਿਆਨੀਅਹੁ ਪੁਰਖਹੁ ਸਾਥ ਤਾਦੀ ਕਰਨੀ ਉਨਹੁ ਨੇ ਆਪਣਾ ਹੀ ਘਾਤ ਕੀਨਾ ਹੈ। ਤੁਰਕਾਂ ਕਉ ਕੂੜਾ ਗੁਰੂ ਤੇਗ ਬਹਾਦਰ ਕੀਆ ਹੈ ਅਰ ਮਾਰਉਂਗਾ ਮੈਂ ਇਨ ਕਉ। Piara Singh Padam ed., *Parchi Patshahi Dasvin Ki*, 52.

does not provide the chronology of events that are provided in either Sainapati or Kankan's accounts.²¹¹

The Guru and the Goddess

The greatest disparity that divides the accounts of the establishment of the Khalsa in the *Sri Gursobha*, *Das GurKatha*, and *Parchi Patshahi Dasvin Ki* is the description of a *homa* performed by Guru Gobind Singh in order to secure the blessings of the Goddess.²¹² Many scholars have focused on this *homa* based on the presence of three compositions describing the goddess in the *Dasam Granth* and the scattered reference to such an event in much later eighteenth century accounts of the Guru's life. Unlike later sources, there is no evidence in the *Apani Katha*, *Sri Gursobha*, *Das GurKatha*, and *Parchi Patshahi Dasvin* that the Guru wished his community, the Khalsa, to worship the goddess. There is no mention of either the goddess or the *homa* in the *Apani Katha* or *Sri Gursobha*.²¹³

²¹¹ In the *rahit* section of the *Chaupa Singh Rahitnama* (1700), the community is also described as *gurkhalsa* in verse 269: ਅਤੇ ਹੁਣ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਪੂਰਨ ਪੁਰਖ ਜੀ ਸਰਚਿ ਸਲਾਮਤ ਹੋਏ ਹੀ ਗੁਰੁਆਈ ਦੀ ਪੰਡਿ ਸਿਖਾ ਦੇ ਸਿਰ ਧਰੀ ਹੈ। ਬਚਨ ਕੀਤਾ ਹੈ। ਜੋ ਸਰਬਤ ਸੰਗਤਿ ਮੇਰਾ ਖਾਲਸਾ ਹੈ। ਅਤੇ ਗੁਰ ਖਾਲਸਾ ਹੈ।

²¹² *Apani Katha* does not deal with the Khalsa so it will not be included in this discussion. However because the *Apani Katha* directly precedes the three narratives of the goddess in the *Bachittar Natak Granth* (Chandi Charitra Ukti Bilas, Chandi Charitra, and Var Sri Bhagauti Ki), which is now a part of the modern printed edition of the *Dasam Granth*, and ends with the author's desire to celebrate the deeds of the goddess, it is possible to make an argument (if one considers Guru Gobind Singh to be the author of *Apani Katha*) that he was cognizant of the power of the goddess.

²¹³ Sainapati's *vidya guru*'s name was Devi Das Chandan. With a guru so obviously identified by his "shakta" nomenclature, it is not insignificant that Sainapati does not mention the occurrence of a *homa* at Naina Devi and its attendant associations with the

In the *Parchi Patshahi Dasvin Ki*, there is a brief mention of the Guru's performance of a *homa* to establish the Khalsa but there is no detail regarding the *homa* and the goddess is not mentioned at all. In fact, that episode serves to highlight the Guru's superiority over the Brahmins who had arrived from Kashi (Benaras).²¹⁴ The most elaborate account of a performance of a *homa* to the goddess occurs in Kankan's *Das GurKatha*. In this text, the Guru performs a *yajna* to procure the blessings of the goddess, and while the goddess appears and blesses the Guru in his mission to establish an invincible *panth*, she does so at the expense of brahminical authority and, ultimately, her own power. Describing the event as follows, Kankan writes,

During the *yajna*, news spread throughout the world that the Devi's verses were being recited.

All the doors were closed. No one could open them without Vahiguru's consent.

devi, double-edged sword, and the birth of the Khalsa. In regard to this issue Indubhushan Banerjee writes, "Saina Pat's account of the Guru's adventures during the pre-Khalsa period and of his reforms is, no doubt, scrappy in the extreme but he gives all the salient facts and his silence with the *hom* ceremony should, therefore, be regarded as significant – the more so, as next to the Guru's own works, the Gur Sobha is possibly the most important authority on Guru Gobind Singh." Indubhushan Banerjee, *Evolution of the Khalsa Volume Two*, 105. For more on this issue please see Ami P. Shah, "The Guru and the Goddess: Chakka Chand Bhagauti Ju Ka and the Rise of the *Tisar Panth*," and "The Founding of the Khalsa: A Contemporary Account by Kavi Kankan," in *Guru Gobind Singh: New Sources, New Voices*, ed. Gurinder Singh Mann. (forthcoming).²¹⁴ Oberoi places a great importance on the "sacred hierarchy and channels of transmission" in the Sikh tradition that valued guru lineages, holy men, ascetics, and traditional intellectuals, but it is clear in this text, as in others from the period, that none of these intermediaries could help the Sikhs. See Harjot Oberoi, *The Construction of Religious Boundaries*, 92-138.

Ghee was offered into the *homa* day and night, as well as barley and sesame.

As the barley and sesame fell from his hands, in that way, Jap fell continuously from his lips. |199|

The guru ate little and slept less.

Uttering this he said, Jagmata heed my request.

I have lost my father and wish to offer you my service.

The desire to have your *darshan* of your feet just once has taken hold in my heart. |200|

A voice came from the sky, now complete this recitation for me.

Until then, continue the *homa*, I will return at its completion.

Whatever you desire in your mind, I will grant you.

Every king and emperor will kneel before you like a disciple. |201|

When the *homa* was completed as per custom, the time of the Devi's arrival came.

The Brahmin then stated, your request will be auspiciously fulfilled.

This is not the work of two men, now you go and sit alone.

The Devi will come on a lion, then with folded hands saying, I am your disciple. |202|

The moment the twice-born opened the doors and left, the Devi arrived immediately.

The brilliance of the Jagmata was like a flash of lightning in the sky.

When Ishwari appeared, the sun was instantly eclipsed.

Guru Gobind Singh trembled and with dread closed both of his eyes. |203|

Then the Devi said, you have no reason to fear.

I will grant whatever you request, do not worry. |204|

If you desire to establish an invincible *panth*.

No king will be able to defeat that *panth* in battle. |205|

Every man will submit to your authority in the four directions.

With everyone coming to meet you, there will be no one left to perform *yajna*. |206|

First, establish your *panth* and afterwards take its measure.

Devas and *daityas* will be defeated by your *panth*. |207|²¹⁵

Three interesting elements emerge from this presentation. First, although Kankan describes the recitation of the Devi's verses during the *yajna*, he simultaneously refers to the Guru's recitation of Jap, a liturgical composition attributed to him. Second, it is clear that the Guru is superior to the Brahmanical custodians of the goddess. And finally, at the end when she blesses him at the end she promises that "no one will be left to perform *yajna*," in a way ensuring her own demise because it is through *yajna* that the gods are quite literally "fed" and sated. Far from intimating a devotional relationship between Guru Gobind Singh and the Goddess, Kankan's account instead emphasizes the power of the Guru.

Neither the *homa* nor the goddess occupy significant space in any of these early accounts.²¹⁶ In contrast to the evidence from these accounts, W.H. McLeod argues that,

The Khalsa solidly believed that the Dasam Granth to be the word of Guru Gobind Singh, and all who took initiation into the Khalsa had no hesitation in accepting this. Inevitably, therefore, the substantial Puranic

²¹⁵ Ami P. Shah, "The Leader of the Sodhis: Kavi Kankan's Account of Guru Gobind Singh's Life."

²¹⁶ There is also an account in the *Chaupa Singh Rahitnama* of the Guru's performance of a *homa*. In this account, the goddess appears for an instant but disappears without granting anything to either the Gurus or the Brahmins standing there.

contents had an influence on their eighteenth and nineteenth century beliefs. In no area was this more significant than in the widespread Khalsa belief in the reality of the goddess Devi.²¹⁷

This claim is problematic in light of the evidence of the accounts found in *Sri Gursobha*, *Das GurKatha*, and *Parchi Patshahi Dasvin Ki* for at least three reasons. First, this episode is only present in one of the accounts and even then, the goddess is not attributed greater power than the Guru; she serves at his behest. Second, given the unity of the Guru and Khalsa in these accounts, it is difficult to maintain that there was room for the worship of any other divinity. All of these accounts stress that liberation is to be achieved in the Guru's Khalsa through his grace. And finally, there is no evidence that either the goddess compositions in the *Dasam Granth* or the *Dasam Granth* itself enjoyed the status of the *Guru Granth*, the scriptural text that actually enshrined the words of the Gurus. Furthermore, while scholars have argued that the *Dasam Granth* provided the "metanarrative" for the "Khalsa's perception of itself as a distinct and bounded community with aspirations to political power," the basic fact remains that the

²¹⁷ W.H. McLeod, *Sikhs of the Khalsa*, 63. Oberoi also argues that the goddess compositions in the *Dasam Granth* represented an acknowledgement of the power of the goddess. He writes, "In early Sikh tradition God was almost exclusively conceived in masculine terms (*Akal Purakh*, *Karta Purakh*) and metaphors (the devotee as a bride yearning for God the bridegroom). The goddess myths in the *Dasam Granth* transpose the early tradition and add a new maternal dimension to Sikh understandings of Ultimate Reality." Harjot Oberoi, *The Construction of Religious Boundaries*, 97. For similar arguments see Nikky Guninder Kaur Singh, *The Birth of the Khalsa: A Feminist Re-Memory of Sikh Identity* (Albany: SUNY, 2005) and *The Feminine Principle in the Sikh Vision of the Transcendent* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

Khalsa is not mentioned once in the entire text.²¹⁸ The association between the Guru and the goddess described by McLeod is largely based upon the inclusion of the first *pauri* (verse) from the Var Sri Bhagauti Ji Ki in the liturgical Sikh *ardas* (petition) and late eighteenth century accounts such as Kesar Singh Chibber's *Bansavalinama*.²¹⁹ The first *pauri* of Sri Var Bhagauti Ji Ki reads,

First, having remembered Bhagauti, meditate upon Guru Nanak. Then may Angad, Amardas, and Ramdas be of assistance. Remembering Arjan, Hargobind and Har Rai. Meditate upon Sri Har Krishan whose glance alone removes all suffering. By meditating upon Tegh Bahadur the nine treasures are obtained. They are of assistance in all places.

Reading the importance of *bhagauti* as an exemplification of the “Divine Feminine,” Frances Luis argues that *bhagauti* is given a special place in the theology of Guru Gobind Singh. He writes,

A similar position is given to Bhagauti in the Sikh tradition and in particular in the writings of Guru Gobind Singh. The word Bhagauti is the feminine form of the masculine noun bhagavant, translated as lord. Bhagauti thus represents the feminine aspect of the Divine and she is honoured by several hymns in both the Dasam Granth and the Sarabloh Granth. These hymns are recited with great fervour by the members of the

²¹⁸ Jeevan Deol, “Eighteenth Century Khalsa Identity: Discourse, Praxis, and Narrative,” 25. In general, scholars have focused on the *Dasam Granth* at the expense of other texts to recreate the period of Guru Gobind Singh. Because scholars have misdated the *rahit* literature to the mid-eighteenth century and *Sri Gursobha* to 1711 they have been unable to properly utilize them as source material; texts such as *Das GurKatha* and *Parchi Patshahi Dasvin Ki* find relatively little mention in accounts of the period.

²¹⁹ ਪਉੜੀ। ਪ੍ਰਿਥਮ ਭਗਉਤੀ ਸਿਮਰਕੈ ਗੁਰੂ ਨਾਨਕ ਲਈ ਧਿਆਈ। ਅੰਗਦ ਗੁਰੂ ਤੇ ਅਮਰਦਾਸ ਰਾਮਦਾਸੈ ਹੋਈ ਸਹਾਇ। ਅਰਜਨ ਹਰਿਗੋਬਿੰਦ ਨੋਂ ਸਿਮਰੋ ਸ੍ਰੀ ਹਰਿਰਾਇ। ਸ੍ਰੀ ਹਰਿ ਕ੍ਰਿਸ਼ਨ ਧਿਆਇਐ ਜਿਸੁ ਡਿਠੇ ਸਭੁ ਦੁਖਿ ਜਾਇ। ਤੇਗ ਬਹਾਦਰ ਸਿਮਰੀਐ ਘਰਿ ਨਉਨਿਧਿ ਆਵੈ ਧਾਇ। ਸਭ ਤਾਂਈ ਹੋਇ ਸਹਾਇ॥

Akali Nihang Singh Khalsa. After all, aren't the Nihangs mentioned as being Durga's warriors in Chandi di Var (CV 47)?²²⁰

Luis is correct in pointing out the feminine grammar of Bhagauti, and indeed it is difficult to deny the importance of *bhagauti* as it appears in the first line of the Sikh *ardas*. However, except for its appearance in the first *pauri* of Var Bhagauti Ji Ki, references to *bhagauti* are extremely slim in the four accounts under discussion here. There are multiple terms for sword in the literature of this period – *jamdhar*, *kharag*, *khanda*, *asi*, and *talvar* – and, as a result, arguments regarding the centrality of *bhagauti* in the Sikh imagination at this point need to take this point into account.²²¹ There is no reference to *bhagauti* in the *Apani Katha*, *Sri Gursobha*, or *Das GurKatha*, and there is one reference to *bhagauti* in the *Parchi Patshahi Dasvin Ki*.²²² While later eighteenth century texts may describe the

²²⁰ Frances Luis, 'The Khanda and the Dhulfihar: Sikh-Shi'a parallelisms and crossings in history and text, concept of the Divine Guide and sacred chivalry,' *Sikh Formations*, 2:2, 173.

²²¹ W.H. McLeod argues that it was not until the Singh Sabha period that the Sikhs were forced to abandon their association with the concept of *bhagauti* as Durga. He writes, "Since the days of the Singh Sabha reform movement the answer to the problem of Chandi or Bhagauti has been to insist that Bhagauti designates not the goddess but Akal Purakh in the form of an unsheathed sword. This provides an example of attempts to make the *rahit-namas* fit the reformed understanding of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Because the intellectual leaders of the Tat Khalsa promulgated the belief that Sikhs were not Hindus the notion that Sikhs could ever have believed that Bhagauti actually meant the goddess Durga was clearly erroneous in the extreme. Prior to the Singh Sabha period, however, the question rarely occurred." W.H. McLeod, *The Sikhs of the Khalsa*, 64. According to this point of view, the Sikhs were indistinguishable from Hindus prior to the colonial period.

²²² ਫੇਰ ਹੁਕਮ ਹੋਆ, ਦੇਖਹੁ ਭਾਈ। ਇਉਂ ਕੋਈ ਨਹੀਂ ਕਹਤਾ ਜੋ ਸੁਬਾਦਾਰ ਕਉ ਸੰਗਤ ਖੋਹਿ ਲੀਆ ਹੈ, ਪਰ ਸੰਗਤਿ ਸੱਚੀ ਹੈ। ਸੰਗਤ ਕਉ ਨਵਾਂ ਪਾਤਸ਼ਾਹੀਆਂ ਸਿਮਰਨੀਆਂ ਪੜਾਈਆਂ ਹੈਨਿ। ਤੇ ਅਬ ਮੈ ਹੁਣ ਸੰਗਤਿ ਕਉ ਭਗਉਤੀ ਪੜਾਵਉਂਗਾ। ਅਰ ਚਿਤੀਆਂ ਸਿਉ ਬਾਜ ਤੜਾਵਉਂਗਾ। ਫਿਰਿ ਇਹੁ ਹੁਕਮ ਹੋਆ ਜੋ ਮੇਰਾ

gifting of a sword to the Guru, none of the contemporary accounts under discussion in this chapter refer to the gifting of any sword to the Guru. Nor do they leave any provision for the deification of either the goddess or the sword.

The Guru's Death

In all of the four accounts of this period, the Guru is the focal point of authority in the community, and with the establishment of the Khalsa, the Guru and community are either explicitly or implicitly described as the *gurkhalsa*. These accounts further highlight this relationship between the Guru and the Khalsa when describing the state of the community at the time of the Guru's death.²²³ In the *Sri Gursobha*, with the Guru's death approaching, the Guru vests authority in the community (*guru panth*) and in the verses of the Gurus (*guru granth*).²²⁴ Sainapati is arguably the first text to articulate the doctrine of *guru panth* and *guru granth*, a doctrine that has maintained its importance in the subsequent centuries of the Sikh tradition. The decision of the Guru to dissolve

ਸਿਖ ਜੋਵੈਗਾ ਸੋ ਕੇਸਾਂ ਬਿਨਾਂ ਅਰ ਸ਼ਸਤ੍ਰਾਂ ਬਿਨਾ ਨ ਰਹੈਗਾ। ਕੇਸਾ ਸ਼ਸਤ੍ਰਾਂ ਬਿਨ ਆਧਾ ਮਨੁਖ ਹੈ। ਸਾਰਾ ਮਨੁਖ ਤਬ ਹੀ ਹੋਤਾ ਹੈ ਜਬ ਕੇਸਾ ਸ਼ਸਤ੍ਰਾਂ ਸਾਹਿਤ ਹੋਤਾ ਹੈ। ਤਾਂ ਗੁਰੂ ਕੇ ਬਚਨ ਪਾਇ ਸਿਖਾਂ ਕੇਸ ਕਰਿ ਲੀਏ ਨਾਲੇ ਸ਼ਸਤ੍ਰ ਕਰਿ ਲੀਏ। Piara Singh Padam, ed. *Parchi Patshahi Dasvin Ki*, 65-66.

²²³ The *Apani Katha* does not address the Guru's death and will not be included in this discussion.

²²⁴ See discussion in Chapter Two.

the office of the human Guru is very clear in *Sri Gursobha*; there is no allowance for the possibility of another human Guru to take his place.²²⁵

In the manuscript version of the *Das GurKatha*, the narration ends with the rise of the Khalsa and, based on his earlier presentation of the Khalsa and Guru as the *gurkhalsa*, Kankan states the strength of the Guru is in the *panth*.²²⁶ In the printed edition of the text, the narrative continues up until the Guru's death at Nanderh. Kankan writes,

Then Satiguru went to the Deccan, he made the journey to *Sachkhand*,
Placing authority in the *panth* and *granth*, those two sources of *brahma gyan*,
Sahib related this truth, 'I will always remain with the Khalsa,'
Kankan, in his heart desires your *darshan*, eternally meditating on the
lotus feet of the Guru. [291]²²⁷

Whether one reads the manuscript or printed version of *Das GurKatha*, they are both informed by an abiding belief in the doctrine of *gurkhalsa*. In Sevas' account of the Guru's death at Nanderh, the entire community (*sarbat khalsa*) gathered and asks the Guru to provide them with a Guru.²²⁸ To which the Guru

²²⁵ This position is supported by a *hukumnama* of Guru Gobind Singh's wife in which she states that anyone who follows a human Guru will find a place in hell. Personal communication with G.S. Mann.

²²⁶ See Ami P. Shah, "The Leader of the Sodhis: Kavi Kankan's Account of Guru Gobind Singh's Life."

²²⁷ Ibid.

²²⁸ ਫੇਰ ਸਬਰਤ੍ਰ ਖਾਲਸੇ ਇਕੱਤ੍ਰ ਹੋ ਕਰਿ ਇਹ ਅਰਦਾਸ ਕੀਨੀ ਜੁ ਸਚੇ ਪਾਤਸ਼ਾਹ। ਖਾਲਸੇ ਕਉ ਫਿਰਿ ਗੁਰੂ ਕਾ ਅੰਚਲ ਪਕੜਾਈਐ। Piara Singh Padam, ed. *Parchi Patshahi Dasvin Ki*, 119.

replied, “I have placed the Khalsa under the protection of the Akal [Purakh].”²²⁹

Alighting upon his funeral pyre, the Guru departs without leaving any trace of his body or weapons.²³⁰ Immediately following his cremation, the community gathers together and acts in a manner keeping with the doctrines of *guru granth* and *guru panth*. Sevasdas describes the scene as follows,

Around the memorial, many *dharamsalas* were established. At every place the *Granth ji* was read and *rababis* sang *shabads*. Seeing that place, thoughts of the Guru come to mind. Whoever travels there, achieves a state of happiness. The entire world offers its worship here, that feeling with which one worships, the Guru fulfills accordingly. There the thirty-six types of food [*amrit prasad*] are prepared and the Sikhs and *sants* partake in it. It is a place of devotion that fulfills the wishes of every human being.²³¹

There doesn't appear to be any confusion as to where authority lies in the community after the Guru's death.

²²⁹ ਹੁਕਮ ਹੋਆ ਖਾਲਸੇ ਕਉ ਮੈਂ ਅਕਾਲ ਕੀ ਗੋਦ ਮਹਿ ਬੈਸਾਇਆ ਹੈ। Ibid.

²³⁰ Given this description regarding the absence of the Guru's remains, the Namdhari tradition has claimed that the Guru did not in fact die at Nanderh but lived in a disguised state as Ajapal Singh for an additional hundred and four years. In 1812, Ajapal Singh bestowed succession on Balak Singh. Tracing the claims of their living Guru, currently Jagjit Singh, back to the early nineteenth century, the Namdharis are an important but extreme minority within the tradition. For more on this topic see Ganda Singh, *Guru Gobind Singh's Death at Nanded: An Examination of Succession Theories* (Faridkot: Guru Nanak Foundation, 1972).

²³¹ ਡੇਹਰੇ ਕੇ ਚਉਫੇਰੇ ਅਨੇਕ ਧਰਮਸਾਲਾਂ ਹੋਈਆਂ। ਸਭ ਠਉੜਿ ਗਿਰੰਥ ਜੀ ਪੜ੍ਹੀਐ, ਅਰ ਰਬਾਬੀ ਸ਼ਬਦ ਗਾਵਹਿ। ਉਹਾਂ ਅਸਥਾਨ ਕਉ ਦੇਖ ਕਰ ਗੁਰੂ ਚਿਤ ਆਵਦਾਂ ਹੈ। ਜੋ ਜੀਉ ਜਾਤਾ ਹੈ, ਸੋ ਪ੍ਰਸੰਨਤਾ ਕਉ ਪਾਵਤਾ ਹੈ। ਜਗਤ ਪੂਜਾ ਚਾੜ੍ਹਤਾ ਹੈ, ਜਿਸ ਜਿਸ ਭਾਵਨੀ ਕਰਕੈ ਕਉ ਪੂਜਾ ਚਾੜ੍ਹਤਾ ਹੈ, ਸੋ ਭਾਵਨੀਆਂ ਗੁਰੂ ਪੁਰਨ ਕਰਤਾ ਹੈ। ਉਹਾਂ ਚੜ੍ਹੀਹ ਅਮ੍ਰਿਤ ਪ੍ਰਸਾਦਿ ਹੋਤੇ ਹਹਿ ਸਭ ਸਿਖ ਸੰਤ ਭ੍ਰੰਡਤੇ ਹਹਿ। ਸਰਬ ਪ੍ਰਕਾਰ ਉਹ ਅਸਥਾਨ ਜੀਵਹੁ ਕੀ ਕਾਮਨਾ ਪੂਰਨ ਕਰਤਾ ਹੈ। Piara Singh Padam, ed., *Parchi Patshahi Dasvin Ki*, 120.

Read in conjunction with one another, it is very clear from these three accounts that the Guru understood the entire community to be the Khalsa and that he vested his authority in the Khalsa at the time of his death. Whereas a close reading of these texts supports this argument, W.H. McLeod argues that

It is not possible to elicit from early eighteenth-century sources a clear awareness and consensus acceptance of the concept of dual authority [Guru *Granth* and Guru *Panth*]. The impression is rather one of a continuing evolution which eventually issues in clearly defined doctrine. It may well be true that the tenth Guru explicitly conferred his authority on the Khalsa and it is certainly true that the scriptures had already acquired a sanctity which implied divine authority. There remains, however, a strong impression of inchoate rather than clearly defined doctrine. The latter form, implicit, in the early eighteenth century situation emerges to clarity and practical application only after a period of uncertainty.²³²

In stark contrast to McLeod's contention regarding the "inchoate" nature of doctrine at the time of the Guru's death, all of the contemporary accounts from this period confirm the Guru's investiture of the Khalsa with his authority. There is no uncertainty betrayed by the Guru as he proclaims the Khalsa equal to him, and from the dating of these texts to 1709 or earlier, there is no intervening period of uncertainty regarding the articulation of this doctrine at the time of the Guru's death. Just as Guru Nanak appointed a successor in his own life to ensure the

²³² W.H. McLeod, "The Development of the Sikh Panth" in *The Saints: Studies in a Devotional Tradition of India*, ed. Karine Schomer and W. H. McLeod (Berkeley: Berkeley Religious Studies Series, 1987), 244.

continuation of his legacy, so too Guru Gobind Singh intentionally established the entire community – the Khalsa – as the locus of authority before the line of the human Gurus came to an end.

Appendix A: Glossary of Epithets, Terms, and Important Dates

Epithets used in the *Sri Gursobha*

Abhinasi Purakh – Indestructible Man
Adi Guru – Original Guru
Agam Karta – Unfathomable Doer
Agam Purakh – Unfathomable Man
Antaryami – Master of the Inner Heart
Bhagvan – God
Bhagavan Purakh – God
Dhani – Great One, Blessed One
Gharib Nivaz – “Cherisher of the Poor”
Guru – Spiritual teacher
Gurudev – Respected teacher
Hari – God
Huzoor – Respected One
Jagadishwar – Master of the world
Kaladhari – Creative One
Karanhar Kartar/Karavanhar Kartar – The Creator
Kartar – The Creator
Kripadhar – Compassionate One
Narayan – God
Nath – Master; Nath-Natham – Master of Masters
Niranjan Purakh – One without fault or blemish
Murare – God
Parabrahma – Supreme God
Parameshwar – Supreme God
Patishah – Emperor, Sovereign
Prabhu – Lord, God
Prabhu Purakh – Divine Man
Purakh – Man
Purakh Vidhata – The Creator
Puran Karta – Perfect Creator
Raj Rajadhirajam – King of Kings
Satiguru – True Guru
Shahenshah – King of Kings
Shahenshah Prabhu – King of Kings Creator
Sujan Purakh – Virtuous Man
Swami – Master
Swami Sirjanhar – Master who creates

Udhanhar – One who uplifts and saves
Vahiguru – Wonderful Guru; an epithet for God in the Sikh tradition

Terms used in the *Sri Gursobha*

Amrit – “nectar”; reference to initiation into Khalsa
Ardas – Petition, request
Bhaddar – Ritual shaving of the head
Darbar – Temporal court of a ruler; divine court of Vahiguru
Dargah – Shrine; the Guru’s house
Darshan – Sacred viewing of the divine
Dasvandh – “one/tenth”; percentage of income sent to the Guru
Deg, Tegh, Fateh – Literally “Cauldron, Sword, Victory”; a slogan that encapsulates a Sikh vision of justice
Dharam – Moral order, religious duty
Dharamsala – Guru’s house; place of worship; religious rest house
Bhuta – Evil spirit, ghost
Baitala – Demon
Bhairava – Fierce male spirit
Ekonkar – “one onkar”; God is one
Farman – Imperial order, command
Ganaka – Prostitute, courtesan
Golak – Donation box, offering box
Gujjar – Pastoral tribe from the Shivalik hills
Gurbani – Verses of the Guru
Gurdwara – “house to the Guru”; Sikh place of worship that houses the *Guru Granth*
Hakim – Ruler
Hukam/Hukam-nama – Order, command/ “Letter of command”
Holi – Spring festival of color associated with Krishna (Kanha)
Hukka – Smoking pipe
Janeu – Sacred thread of the twice-born castes
Kalgi – Aigrette
Kaliyug – “dark age”; reference to the fourth time period in Hindu cosmology during which *dharam* is forsaken
Katak – Harvest festival that occurs in October-November, i.e. Diwali
Karam – Action, moral duty
Kesdhari – S/he with unshorn hair.
Khalsa – “the pure”; the name given to the Sikh community by Guru Gobind Singh
Khande di Pahul – Initiation by the double edged sword

Khatri – Punjabi mercantile caste
 Khillat – Ceremonial robe granted by a political ruler
 Khulasa – Reference to those wayward Sikhs who did not accept the *rahit*.
 Kosa – Distance of approximately 1.5 miles
 Kusangat – Evil company
 Maru – A martial *rag*
 Masand – Deputy; representative of Guru's authority in a Sikh community
 Miri and Piri – Temporal and spiritual authority
 Misl – Regiment
 Naib – Deputy
 Nam, Dan, Ishnan – “Divine Name, Donation, and Purity”; a triumvirate of values whose importance in the tradition can be traced to Guru Nanak
 Narad – Divine sage
 Naubat – Ceremonial music indicating a royal presence
 Nishan – Saffron colored flag with insignia of *deg*, *tegh*, *fateh*; generic term for banner or standard; type of drum
 Pahar – period of three hours; there are eight *pahars* in one day
 Panc Hathiyar – Literally, “five weapons” enumerated as the shield (*dal*), sword (*talvar*, *asi*, *kharag*, *bhagauti*), twin-blade sword (*jamdhar*), bow (*kaman*), a small lance (*neza*). Occasionally, a gun (*banduk*) is also included
 Panj Pyare – “five beloved ones”; they were the first five to answer to the call of Guru Gobind Singh when he established the Khalsa
 Panth – Community, tradition
 Pari – Fairy
 Parsad – Blessed food offerings
 Phagun – The months of February-March when the festival of Holi occurs
 Pisach – Demon
 Pret – Ghost, wicked spirit
 Rag – Melody
 Rahit – Proper conduct
 Raj – Rule, governance
 Raja – King, Rajput hill chief
 Ranghar –Rajput
 Ras – Circular dance of Krishna and the *gopis* (cowherdess)
 Sadh – Virtuous person
 Sadhak – Religious adept
 Sahibzada – “born of a king”; reference to the four sons of Guru Gobind Singh
 Sant – Virtuous person
 Sangat – Good company
 Savan – The rainy season of July-August
 Sangat – Company of the virtuous; *satsangat* – the true community

Shabad – Verses of the Guru
Seva – Service, love, devotion
Sevak – Devotee, disciple
Sikh – Disciple
Singh – “lion”; an appellation for Sikh men
Sirgum – One with a shaved head
Smṛti – Category of revealed texts in the Hindu tradition
Suba – Administrative province
Subedar – Governor
Sudi – Period of the waxing moon; *vadi* – period of the waning moon
Sultan – Emperor
Tilak – Forehead mark
Vazir – Minister
Yama – God of Death
Yogini – Malevolent female spirit, goddess

The Ten Gurus

Guru Nanak 1469-1539
Angad 1504-1552; Guru 1539-52
Amar Das 1479-1574*; Guru 1552-74
Ram Das 1534-1581; Guru 1574-81
Arjan 1563-1606; Guru 1581-1606
Hargobind 1591/1595-1644*; Guru 1606-1644
Har Rai 1630-1661; Guru 1644-61
Har Krishan 1656-1664; Guru 1661-64
Tegh Bahadur 1621-1675; Guru 1664-1675
Guru Gobind Singh 1661/1666-1708*; Guru 1675-1708

Guru Gobind Singh's Family

Parents

Guru Tegh Bahadur and Mata Gujarī

Wives

Mata Jito – marriage in 1677; sons Jujhar, Zoravar, and Fateh Singh

Mata Sundari – marriage in 1685; son Ajit Singh

Mata Sahib Kaur

Sons

Ajit Singh – 1686-1704

Jujhar Singh – 1690-1704

Zoravar Singh – 1697-1704

Fateh Singh – 1699-1704

Timeline of Events

- 1661/6 – Birth of Guru at Patna (Bihar)
- 1675 – Execution of Guru Tegh Bahadur
- 1688 – Battle of Bhangani
- 1689 – Battle of Nadaun
- 1693 – First Battle of Anandpur
- late 1690s – Establishment of Khalsa
- 1702 – Battles of Nirmoh and Kalimot
- 1704 – Siege and Evacuation of Anandgarh
- 1704 – Battles of Sarsa and Chamkaur
- 1705 – Battle of Khidrana (Muktsar)
- 1707 – Death of Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb, meeting with Bahadur Shah in Agra
- 1707 – Battle of Kichak
- 1708 – Guru is wounded and dies in 1708 at Nanderh (Maharashtra)

* The birth dates of these Gurus are unclear at this point. For a discussion of a revised birthdate of 1509 for Guru Amardas see Raijasbir Singh, *Guru Amardas Srot Pustak* (Amritsar: Guru Nanak Dev University, 1986), 229; for a revised birthdate of 1590 for Guru Hargobind see Piara Singh Padam, *Khashatam Guru de Khat Darshan* (Patiala: Kalam Mandir, 1994); and for a revised birthdate of 1661 for Guru Gobind Singh see Gurinder Singh Mann, “Sources for the Study of Guru Gobind Singh’s Life and Times” *Journal of Punjab Studies* 15 (2008), 261.

Appendix B: English Translation of the *Sri Gursobha*

Chapter One

Description of the Rise of the Panth

[Poet of] the Khalsa²³³

Dohra

At one time, for the benefit of the people I love, I uttered this with all of my heart and mind.

In this way Prabhu created all of creation, whose story I will narrate to you. |1|

Savaiyya

Upon hearing it, I will describe this praise of God,

Though my competence may be limited, I am in need of your kindness,

Making a request with folded hands, you will assist me in the proper way,

Only you can narrate your praise, and through me you are doing so. |2|

Dohra

With my limited mind, in what way can your story be explained?

Petitioning with folded hands, I seek Satiguru's assistance. |3|

Bowing in greeting, I perform *ardas*,

In order to create a volume of your story, please illuminate my intelligence. |4|

Upon consideration, I have given this volume the name *Gursobha*,

Listening and reciting, one achieves liberation by fixing you in the heart. |5|

The year 1700 and [5]8 has passed,

During Bhado *sudi* 15,²³⁴ I created this story with affection. |6|

²³³ “*khalsabac*.”

Relating the praise of Satiguru, meditating day and night,
O Creator, give me the boon of a sharpened mind. |7|

Chaupai

With your grace, the teaching of the Guru,
The sorrow of lifetimes is destroyed.
Then this came into this fallen soul's mind,
Through the grace of his kindness, the Guru revealed the path. |8|
O friends, then this speech arose in me,
That I should relate the story of Satiguru.
What God told the Guru,
I tell you that now, listen and keep it in your mind. |9|
The unblemished *panth* is a radiant light,
Deep, strong, profound, and encompassing.
When the Guru said this thing, my mind was illumined.
The perfect one was kind. |10|
Praise the Satiguru in this way,
And accordingly, you will achieve liberation.
All merit will come to you in his shelter,
You will be liberated from the cycle of birth and death. |11|
Now recite the names of Satiguru,
Recognize him as the Param Purakh.
First Satiguru Nanak appeared,
Angad, Amardas, became manifest. |12|
Then Ramdas was known as Guru,
Remember Arjan and Hargobind.

²³⁴ The light half of the month of Bhado which falls during August-September.

Then Har Rai was Guru,
Followed by Guru Har Krishan. |13|
Guru Tegh Bahadur emerged,
He covered all of creation with his protection.
He protected *karam* and *dharam*,
His eternal story was witnessed in the Kaliyug. |14|
His fame spread across the world like this,
He safeguarded all *dharam*.
Whose praise resounds in the three worlds,
Satiguru, protected honor in this way. |15|
Forehead mark, sacred thread, and places of worship,²³⁵
They became firm because of his compassion.
For the sake of *dharam*, he went to the abode of God,
Known as Guru Gobind Singh. |16|

Savaiyya

Guru Tegh Bahadur and Guru Gobind Singh became the cause and source of
liberation,
Their praises filling the three worlds, the *Adi Guru* has revealed himself as the
doer of deeds,
Destroy the evil ones and uplift the good, liberator of the whole world, remover of
fear,
All of the gods proclaim [his] praise, they have come and taken shelter with the
Guru. |17|

²³⁵ “*tilak, janeu, dharamsal.*”

Chaupai

Then Kartar blessed the Guru,
Reflecting, Prabhu said these words,
You, establish my *panth*,
Give good advice, guide the people. |18|
That person afraid of Yama's path,
He should listen to your teaching and take shelter in you,
Whoever would create my *panth* with affection,
I will be with him in this way. |19|
The devotees that I had created,
Taking this power they made themselves known,
They began to worship themselves and,
Became immersed in themselves. |20|
They made this promise with me,
'We will recite your praise night and day,'
Forgetting this understanding, they remained in the dirt,
There is no liberation for them. |21|

Bhujang Prayat Chhand

Creator, Destroyer, Builder, Demolisher,
The Doer, Creator, Free from birth,
You have fashioned many great living warriors,
Bequeating them dynasties in the created world. |22|
With kingdoms stretching from sunrise to sunset,
They filled themselves with pride and diverted their attention away from you,
Great *rakshas*²³⁶ who were powerful made offerings to themselves,

²³⁶ Demons.

Moving, shaking, supporting, leaving progeny. |23|
These arrogant ones did not know the one,
I sent Chandi to deal with them,
She reduced them to ashes and she was praised in the world,
She proclaimed herself the one with no other. |24|
I made many powerful kings who carried great canopies,
They were also led astray and fought mighty battles,
To kill them Vishnu was summoned,
He incarnated in [those] many forms. |25|
Having killed them, he reduced them to ashes,
His own praises were sung in the world and he saw himself as the source,
I sent Brahma and he styled himself as the the demi-urge,
He could not fathom an iota of my mystery. |26|
Shiva declared himself chief of the gods,
He was deluded and had others worship him,
I have made royal sages who had canopies,
They created the *Smṛti* and that became a source of worship. |27|

Rasaval Chhand

However many *panths*, all are seen,
They could not fathom, know this fact, |28|
Whoever I sent, they began to declare themselves,
This is the truth, do not create such disturbance. |29|
When I made you, I expected this,
Start my *panth*, this is your duty. |30|
Saying this, he dispatched him, then I came into the world,
Appearing as *kesdhari*, he began all over again. |31|
Beginning the swing of love, a wondrous show,

Important matters were said, many battles waged.[32]
The brave Singhs fought and completed the work,
Laying an immovable foundation, that cannot be removed.[33]
Know this, as the truth in your heart,
Establish the *panth* as I have told you.[34]
That cannot be hidden or be diminished,
That increases in strength daily, and announces itself with the sound of the
drum.[35]
Whoever will hear this, will have a vision of you,
Taking refuge in you, he will attain all happiness.[36]

Bhujang Prayat Chhand

Many are there lost in their delusion,
Many have come to your protection and have acquired knowledge,
How many have come and have gone?
The compassionate creator provided this wisdom.[37]
With folded hands, I have come to your shelter,
You gave the name Khalsa and proclaimed us as liberated,
All the comfort will come to you, you will rule,
Listen to this request, King of Kings.²³⁷ [38]
My trust in you should become more complete,
Give me this blessing, creator of creators,
Give this gracious glance that I will always see you,
Command that I will always reflect on your words.[39]
I know this to be true that there is only one light,
I will remain in your shelter and never to go to another,

²³⁷ “*Raj-Rajadhirajam.*”

May I always praise you, this is all I desire,
Whatever you want me to say, give me that gift.|40|
So that I can recite this night and day and [in] every month,
My breath filled with this, I recite this while waking and sleeping,
He whose flame always burns,
That light will remain from now until the end. |41|

Thus concludes the account in *Sri Gursobha* of the Rise of the Panth and Praise of the Command. The first chapter is auspiciously concluded.

Chapter Two

The Account of the Rise of the Sword and the Mighty Battle

Dohra

Reflect on the deeds of Prabhu Purakh,
Relating his praise to the best of my ability, fix that in your heart. 1|42|
From beginning to end, this story is new,
No amount of description can capture this story. 2|43|

Chaupai

The unfathomable story of Agam Purakh,
It is only through the Guru's grace that I can relate this,
It is only through his grace that I can relate his story,
From Satiguru the highest truth is attained. 3|44|
The embodiment of truth, his exceedingly virtuous form,
His form deserving of wondrous praise,
There is no one equal to him,
Your auspiciousness is unique, O Prabhu. 4|45|

Kabitt

You are Guru Nanak, you are Guru Angad,
You are Guru Amardas and Ramdas.
You are Guru Arjan, you are Guru Hargobind,
You are Guru Har Rai, and Har Krishan are you.
In the Kaliyug the ninth sovereign manifested the divine,
Tegh Bahadur himself, protecting the entire world.
You are the tenth sovereign, Guru Gobind Singh,

You are Prabhu who has come to liberate the world 5|46|

Savaiyya

The caretaker of the world and most worthy, the hero of the three worlds,
Reciting these verses, sent for this work, [he told his son], establish the true *panth*
as your mission,
Spread the truth, immersed in it, [he was] sent to destroy the egoistic wrong
headed ones,
Attached to the name dispelling delusion, filled with love of God, knowing the
truth. 6|47|

Dohra

The beautiful site of Makhawal was the place Satiguru inhabited,
There he passed his time in various miraculous sports. 7|48|

Chaupai

Many years passed in this way,
Satiguru went to the territory of Paunta,
Building a palace on the edge of the Yamuna,
Everyone was greatly pleased. 8|49|
Various activities were conducted,
Hearing of this, Fateh Shah²³⁸ was anxious,
His mind filled with great anger,
Preparing his army he arrived for battle. 9|50|

²³⁸ The Raja of Garhwal.

Dohra

Assembling a powerful force, joined by other armies,
When they came close to the camp, news reached the *darbar*. 10|51|

Savaiyya

Mounted on horseback, you yourself Gobind Singh arrived there,
The threatening sound of drums and the flag flying there,
Arriving there a four fold battle formation, divided into regiments,
The fierce clash commenced and the warriors' minds were full of anger. 11|52|

Dohra

Having laid the formation, Fateh Shah stood at the center,
With him were other Rajas, their minds full of pride.12|53|
The numerous regiments of this army, the Shah²³⁹ made an assessment,
With a single blow all of these [arrayed here] will disappear. 13|54|
Fateh Shah moved his army there, and [Sangram] Shah²⁴⁰ here,
Many noble and strong warriors were present who had won many battles.14|55|

Savaiyya

Angered, the warriors came in from both sides brandishing their weapons in
battle,
Falling from their horses, the battle formation in the field, many died fighting in
battle.
Bhutas, baitalas, bhairavas dancing, and vultures circling the field,
Descending *yoginis* and *prets* were satisfied filling their bellies with a taste of
death. 15|56|

²³⁹ The Guru's leader in battle.

²⁴⁰ Cousin of the Guru.

Savaiyya

His anger rising, Jaimal²⁴¹ came to the field brandishing a spear,
Attacking the enemy, he pierced many hearts with great anger,
Killing numerous cavalry, he disrupted the four-flank formation,²⁴²
A loud sound created by a single horse-rider created havoc on the field. 16|57|
Thundering forward, attacking the enemy, warriors had no concern for their
bodies,
Like a moth drawn to a flame with no fear of burning,
There was great tumult in the field, as if Kanha²⁴³ was playing Holi,
As if sprinkling them in color, repulsing the other group. 17|58|
Then brandishing a sword, Mahuri Chand²⁴⁴ came forward,
Those who attacked him from horseback, he pulled them down and killed them,
He killed many and had no fear for himself,
Killing a warrior, he would hack them into two and four pieces. 18|59|
Hearing these sounds of war, Gangaram²⁴⁵ also rushed there with his sword,
Striking the head of a horse-man, dividing him into pieces on the ground,
Destroying the four divisions, many fell to the ground full of fear,
The call to disperse spread as this warrior arrived as the form of death. 19|60|

Niraj Chhand

Lal Chand²⁴⁶ arrived, stretching his bow and arrow,
Battling beautifully, there was great praise for him. 20|61|

²⁴¹ Also known as Jitmal, he was the brother of Sango Shah and the cousin of the Guru.

²⁴² The four flank formation (catur-ang) consists of horses, elephants, infantry, and
canons.

²⁴³ Krishna.

²⁴⁴ Cousin of the Guru.

²⁴⁵ Cousin of the Guru.

²⁴⁶ A fighter in the Guru's army.

Assuming his spectacular form, repulsing many enemies,
Killing an untold number, who called out for help. 21|62|
Like a farmer cutting his fields, he winnowed them there,
No life was spared, every one there was felled. 22|63|
Fighting with steel, no life was spared,
Warriors moving with a beautiful gait, carefree of concern. 23|64|

Savaiyya

Filled with anger, Mahuri Chand armed with weapons rushed to the battlefield,
One after another he felled these brave warriors on the battlefield,
So many corpses piled upon one another, the field overflowing with blood,
A heavy flow of water, like water flowing past the edge of a river. 24|65|
Their minds full of resolve, fighting as if this opportunity would not arise again,
Filled with anger, taking out their swords, their heads were cut,
They offered these to Prabhu [in tribute] and departed again for battle,
Appearing like the brave Drona²⁴⁷, Dayaram²⁴⁸ appeared in battle. 25|66|
Wielding a stick, Kirpal²⁴⁹ killed Hayat Khan,²⁵⁰
He struck him as a hammer breaks a stone,
The intoxicated elephants were hit and as forced to retreat,
With the repeated blows they were grievously injured. 26|67|
Taking spears in their hands, they attacked like lions seeing a deer,
Screaming for blood, the armies attacked each other with arrows echoing,
With broken weapons fallen to the ground, so many were injured by them,
Innumerable warriors were injured, Gobind rescued Nand Chand.²⁵¹ 27|68|

²⁴⁷ Royal Guru to the Kauravas and Pandavas.

²⁴⁸ Commander in Guru's army.

²⁴⁹ A fighter in the Guru's army.

²⁵⁰ Pathan deserter from Guru Gobind Singh's army.

²⁵¹ Two warriors in the Guru's army.

Handling a sword, the warriors ran to the battlefield in attack,
Corpse fell upon corpse, having been cut through by one weapon or the other,
Arrows flying, bodies wounded, brave warriors bearing their brunt and falling on
the battlefield,
In order to protect Kirpal you arrived at that time. 28|69|
Sahib Chand is mind full of anger rushed the field,
Fighting furiously with sword in hand, he killed many,
Resisting their attacks, he confronted the warriors,
Shouting back at them he felled those soldiers in battle.29|70|
Shah Sangram fought with the strength of Bhim,
Many Khans were injured and dejected they departed,
The Singhs roared in the battlefield, having killed those deers,
His mind filled with anger Sangram came into battle brandishing a weapon. 30|71|
Angrily, Hari Chand²⁵² unleashed his arrows,
Steadily killing warriors and throwing them to the ground,
Wielding weapons, Jitmal was killed as well as Hari Chand,
Fighting many warriors they departed for their heavenly abode. 31|72|

Bhujang Prayat Chhand

These brave warriors fought, arrows were unleashed and many were killed.32|73|
Drums sounding, heavy gunfire, bows clashing, innumerable arrows. 33|74|
Cannons firing, warriors dejected met their end, keeping their honor intact. 34|75|
Dying for a cause, those warriors were wounded, departing for heaven fighting
with their weapons. 35|76|

²⁵² Commander in Fateh Shah's army.

Dohra

Those warriors that were the leaders of the army,
Those who survived ran to the hills. 36|77|

Savaiyya

Running to the hills, [Fateh] Shah was accompanied by his warriors,
The Dhadhaval²⁵³ ran with him, the warriors rushed together and unleashed their
arrows,
The Raja Chand left the battlefield, running to the hills, with a weapon in hand,
Standing firm in battle the Pathans fought to maintain their name. 37|78|
Then full of rage Najabat Khan²⁵⁴ returned to the field,
Shah Sangram was standing there and he attacked him,
The Shah rushed forward at him carrying his weapon and killed him,
The warriors fighting rushed and the Shah departed for heaven.²⁵⁵ 38|79|

Dohra

Prabhu bestowed the title of Shah Sangram to Sango,
By his great deeds, he acquired the name. 39|80|

Savaiyya

Fighting Sangram Shah departed for heaven, Prabhu charged with his weapons,
Holding his powerful bow, he felled a warrior,
Then again, with his weapon he hit Bhikhan Khan²⁵⁶ in the face,
The Pathan was saved, but then hit by an arrows he was killed. 40|81|

²⁵³ Dhadha is a Rajput tribe, Dhadhaval²⁵³, “one from the Dhadha tribe” was a chief on Fateh Shah’s side.

²⁵⁴ Pathan deserter from Guru Gobind Singh’s army.

²⁵⁵ Prabhupur, “City of God.”

²⁵⁶ Pathan deserter from Guru Gobind Singh’s army.

Dohra

Then with his arrows Prabhu killed Bhikhan Khan,
Other warriors came from the four directions. 41|82|

Niraj Chhand

Hari Chand arrived, decorated with bow and arrow,
Arrows flying past his arms, no one was able to harm Prabhu. 42|83|
Grazed by his ear, but unharmed,
He sent his arrow in return, killing his enemy. 43|84|
Touching his metal armour, falling by the horse's feet,
Its sharp edge pricked, but Prabhu Purakh was saved. 44|85|
Thinking about the battle, holding his bow and arrow,
He unleashed those murderous arrows, and killed the enemy. 45|86|
Many warriors rushed forward, with their arrows flying,
Killing Hari Chand, with him many others fell. 46|87|
Those who were saved ran away, Prabhu's drums resounded,
Full of bliss, at Prabhu's abode. 47|88|

Savaiyya

Victorious in this mighty battle, experiencing great happiness, everyone sang the
praises of Gobind,
Blessed is Prabhu's name, in victory over evil, the drums were sounded,
These invincible warriors, you defeated them in one battle,
With Gobind Singh's victory cries of victory filled the three worlds and fourteen
realms. 48|89|
Victorious in battle, Prabhu arrived in Paunta, and prepared to leave with his
army,

Packing everything, all were ready to leave,
Arriving in Kahlur you established Anandpur and took rest,
The brave were rewarded and the cowards turned out. 49|90|

Dohra

Many days and years were spent at that place,
The victorious ones were protected and the evil ones killed. 50|91|

Thus concludes the account in *Sri Gursobha* of the Rise of the Sword and the
Mighty Battle. The second chapter is auspiciously concluded.

Chapter Three

Battle against the Rajas

Dohra

To help the Rajas, war was undertaken, know this,
Now I will describe the story of the Nadaun war. 1|92|
Miyān Khan²⁵⁷ deputed the chief Alif Khan,²⁵⁸
Coming to Nadaun and making his presence known with such fanfare. 2|93|
Bhim Chand²⁵⁹ was the undisputed king of Kahlur,
He did not get along with him resulting in a fierce battle. 3|94|
Summoning kings from all places, he assembled them,
They sent Satiguru a request to be gracious. 4|95|

Savaiyya

Preparing their army, at the time for battle they all arrived there,
Each and every brave and might warrior were gathered to fight, sounding the
drums,
The war commenced, warriors fought and in this army many were wounded,
Handling a musket, at that time you sent many warriors to their death. 5|96|

Dohra

The army of the enemies began to encroach and came very close,
Then leaving the musket, the creator took hold of the powerful bow. 6|97|

²⁵⁷ Also known as Hifazulla Khan. He was a deputy (*naib*) in Mughal service stationed at Lahore.

²⁵⁸ Nephew of Miyān Khan.

²⁵⁹ The Raja of Kahlur.

Savaiyya

Handling a bow, giving a challenge, he sent arrows in the form of death itself,
Numerous warriors were killed, many more despondent, others destroyed and
departed the field,
Many turned back, ran towards their homes, scared they left behind their armor
and weapons,
It was deserted for some time, then Khan arrived there. 7|98|
Handling weapons, making a great challenge, killing many, the warriors departed,
Those Khans that once ran away for shelter, all came back to fight,
The arrows and shots ran until midnight, the Khans quickly left there,
Alif Khan did his best, with strength he aimed his weapon.8|99|

Dohra

Upon winning the battle, they arrived at the banks of the Beas,
They stayed there for eleven days. 9|100|
They watched the divisions go back to their places,
Then at that time, Satiguru, Sujan Purakh departed.10|101|
Then he arrived at the neighboring village Alsoon.
At that time, he said 'let us raid this place.' 11|102|

Savaiyya

The warriors who invaded Alsoon were of such an appearance and handled their
weapons with great agility,
Those who resisted, were quickly sent to their death,
They killed so many that the others left all their wealth and homes behind,
The moving arrows were melodious, the nighty ran away, that is what was been
told [to me]. 12|103|

Dohra

Victorious in Alsoon they rang the kettle-drums,

Then Guru Gobind Singh returned to the auspicious Anandpur. 13|104|

Thus concludes the account in *Sri Gursobha* of the Battle against the Rajas.

Chapter Four

A Battle Against the Khanzada and Husaini

Dohra

In this way, many days and years passed,
Those [*masands*] who stole from Prabhu were eliminated. 1|105|
Accompanied by his son, Dilawar Khan²⁶⁰ prepared his army,
They challenged Prabhu to come without delay. 2|106|

Savaiyya

With an army comprised of a thousand cavalry forces, they came for the purpose
of war,
The day had passed and it was early night when the cavalry beat their drum,
Seeing them standing upon the river's edge, [the Guru's] spy returned by stealth.
He went and told those who were on duty at the gate. 3|107|

Dohra

Listening to and reflecting on this, Alam²⁶¹ informed Prabhu,
Who bid farewell to the army with his blessing. 4|108|

Savaiyya

Attacking that army with weapons in hand, crying out they rushed forward,
Each and every brave warrior moved with zeal on horseback, sounding the drums,
Hearing the melody of those drums and the battle cries of those warriors, the
Khans departed,

²⁶⁰ Faujdar of Kangra.

²⁶¹ Alam Shah, affiliated with Guru Gobind Singh.

It seemed as if, innumerable armies had gathered there. 5|109|

Dohra

The Khan ran forward at that time, feeling great fear in his heart,
Like a deer fleeing from a lion, as if it had the wings. 6|110|
Unable to touch Prabhu's place, their minds filled with rage,
They uprooted the village of Barva and ran in the other direction. 7|111|

Bhujang Prayat Chhand

When the son of Husaini was repulsed,
[Husain Khan]²⁶² prepared his armies and arrived there quickly.
On the way, he met with many Rajas,
In opposition to accepted custom, he insulted them. 8|112|
Fighting with bravery in the field,
He [Husain Khan] spoke rudely to those Rajas,
Fighting with great effort he won the field,
With full force Hari Singh rushed forward at Kripal [Chand]²⁶³. 9|113|
Accompanied by seven Sikhs, they unleashed bloodshed,
Fighting Sangati Singh²⁶⁴, breached the fort,
In order to fight Prabhu, the Khan arrived,
On the way, Kirpal [Chand] was felled by death. 10|114|

Dohra

In order to fight the war, Husaini Khan prepared all of his troops,
He died on the way while establishing his might. 11|115|

²⁶² Commander of Dilawar Khan's forces.

²⁶³ Brother of the Raja of Kangra.

²⁶⁴ Warrior in the Guru's army.

Chaupai

Prabhu performed many other miracles,
Only Prabhu can undertake such sport,
As for ordinary mortals,
They will never understand his mystery. 12|116|

Thus concludes the account in *Sri Gursobha* of the Battle against Khanzada and Husaini.

Chapter Five

Rise of the Command

Dohra

Now I will tell you about Guru Gobind Singh's city, Anandpur,
Surrounded by mountains and situated on the bank of the Satluj.1|117|
The month of Chet²⁶⁵ passed and there was a great fair,
While giving *darshan* at the time of Vaisakhi, Satiguru reflected. 2|118|
The *sangat* came for *darshan* from cities far and wide,
The compassionate one provided [them] with a generous *darshan*.3|119|
Gobind Singh made the *sangat* joyous and blessed them,
Then the Khalsa was revealed and all entanglements were resolved. 4|120|
The entire *sangat* gathered on the bank of the Satluj,
Listening to this many became Khalsa, and many were irresolute. 5|121|
Discard the *masands* and recognize only the one, this wisdom was declared,
The Guru and the Sikhs are united as fish with water.6|122|
This is the true *sangat*, this is genuine wisdom,
Without good fortune this state can not be achieved in the world.7|123|
Discipline, duty, worship, have one name – Gobind,
Once it is recited, one experiences an unparalleled experience of bliss.8|124|
O Friend, reflect on the words of Gurudev in your heart,
In mind, speech, and action reflect upon [these words] and experience the comfort
of his shelter.9|125|
Whoever's destiny is fortunate, will come under his shelter,

²⁶⁵ March-April.

An other's prideful mind full of arrogance will wander aimlessly. 10|126|
My wealth can be found in the *sangat* said Gobind Singh,
Those who will listen to this wisdom will enjoy bliss. 11|127|
Those who had love in their hearts appeared before the Guru,
Reciting the treasure of the name, their life will be successful.12|128|
Guru Gobind Singh, Guru Gobind Singh, the creator,
The entire world knows he has come to liberate the world.13|129|

Kabitt

In the Kaliyug, the formless creator,
Gobind Singh came to liberate the world.
Fighting demons, killing the unrighteous,
Fashioning the Khalsa in order to destroy troubles.
Punishing the slanderers, inspiring the Sikhs,
Others should praise these people day and night.
It was revealed that whoever derides the Sikhs of the Khalsa,
Knowingly, will fall into hell.14|130|

Dohra

In order to liberate the world, Satiguru reflected,
Keep the *masands* at a distance from you, make the world pure.15|131|

Chhapai Chhand

You have made the world pure by relating this declaration,
By revealing the Khalsa, the evil ones were frightened,
Listening, the people reflected, and were pleased by these wondrous deeds,
This secret matter was finally revealed by Gurudev,

Who will accept this, will be a virtuous person, and [that person] will achieve liberation,
I seek the dust of the feet of that Sikh who is under Satiguru's protection.16|132|

Dohra

He is the powerful creator, there is no one equal to him,
Whoever serves him, he will obtain that.17|133|

Chaupai

Only a fortunate one will recognize his precious declaration,
Only those who receive his grace, will know his compassion,
The Guru made this declaration to the Sikhs,
They who had appeared in the world. 18|134|
Do not associate with any *sirgum*,
Renounce all association with the five,²⁶⁶
During their death or marriage ceremonies,
There no Sikh should ever attend.19|135|

Dohra

No Sikh will go to him for either marriage or death,
This is the declaration of Karanhar to the *sangat*. 20|136|

²⁶⁶ The five forbidden groups (*panj mel*) include: *Minas*, a group that disputes the succession of Guru Arjan and instead vested authority in Pirthi Chand, the elder son of Guru Ramdas; *Dhirmalias*, a group, led by Dhirmal, the grandson of Guru Hargobind who did not accept the authority of his brother, Guru Hari Rai; *Masand*, deputies who represented the Guru in Sikh communities; *bhaddar*, a Hindu practice of shaving one's hair according to the requirements of certain ritual events; and, *kurdhimar*, those individuals and communities that killed girl children in their preference for a male child.

Chaupai

Renounce the *hukka*, sing the praises of Hari,
He will experience Hari's pleasure in his daily life,
O Brother, abandon *bhaddar*,
Then he related this matter to the Sikhs.21|137|
Even when their own mother and father die,
They should not perform *bhaddar*,
Gobind is our mother and father,
These other rituals are meaningless. 22|138|
Therefore do not make the error of performing *bhaddar*,
Remember this instruction as truth,
Bhaddar is delusion, it is not *dharam*.
This is well-established in the mind of the good people.23|139|

Dohra

The *sangat* should not perform *bhaddar*, they should not shave their head,
For s/he whose mother or father dies, Satiguru gave this teaching.24|140|

Chaupai

Prayer, *golak*, and *dasvandh*,
Keep them in the house, discard the *masands*.
Any offering for Satiguru,
Offer that in his presence. 25|141|
He told them of this custom and conduct,
The virtuous people heard this and were delighted.
Together with the true *sangat*, going for *darshan*,
Having *darshan*, great happiness is experienced. 26|142|
The darkness of their lifetimes will be destroyed,

Whoever has a *darshan* of Satiguru.
Even if a criminal has *darshan*,
With one glance he will be liberated.27|143|

Kabitt

He has brought light and this exquisite light shines in the four directions,
There even the light of the sun and moon appear modest.
His *darshan* is such, evil thoughts will disappear,
All sins are eradicated, freed from all fetters.
All of the gods serve the Khalsa,
Relating this secret, great happiness arose.
O Sikhs say, ‘Vahiguru, Vahiguru, Vahiguru’,
‘Satiguru, Satiguru, Satiguru is Gobind.’ 28|144|

Dohra

He is my support, he is capable of everything,
The powerful Prabhu supports everything, without him there is no other.29|145|

Kabitt

When Satiguru the creator made this declaration,
From beginning to end, the entire *sangat* is my Khalsa.
He who heeds the *hukam*, will be my true Sikh,
He who doesn’t heed the *hukam* will be bereft.
Abandon the evil company²⁶⁷ of the five, cherish the *sangat*,
Renounce all greed, become firm in compassion and *dharam*.
Neither smoke the *hukka* nor shave the head and beard,

²⁶⁷ “*kusangat*.”

Those are the Khalsa of the Vahiguru's Guru. 30|146|

Dohra

Giving *darshan*, he bid farewell, Giving the mantra, god is one.

Saying 'Khalsa Khalsa,' this is wisdom.31|147|

Adil

The creator of creators gave this command,

Removing all of the *masands*, I have made the Khalsa,

Those who believe me, their lives are successful,

Those who drink *amrit*, break Yama's noose,

Whatever you do, only that comes to pass.32|148|

Dohra

He administered the *khande di pahul*, Prabhu the creator,

He established the Khalsa in the ten directions, nothing was comparable to
it.33|149|

Adil

By giving *khande di pahul*, the brilliance [of the world] was increased,

Making the Singh powerful, the *hukam* was established,

Those whose destiny was arranged, they achieved this state,

There were also fools led astray, who did not fathom the secret,

They will die empty handed, this was there designated fate.34|150|

Dohra

Abandon the company of the evil and burn all wicked thoughts,

Your *hukam* is absolutely true, whoever will heed it will not fall into hell.35|151|

Adil

Do not have any contact with those *sirgum* in either death or marriage,
He should not show any fondness for the company of the five,
Abandoning the meaningless rituals [of the world], burning all sin,
In the majesty of the true *sangat*, no one will fall into hell,
Your *hukam* is the most true and gives pleasure.36|152|

Dohra

Everything in your *hukam* is true, Swami Sirjanhar,
How many died rotting in delusion, unable to reflect [on that].37|153|

Adil

Kartar made a declaration, do not bring the razor to the face,
Keeping love for the Guru in your heart, follow his orders,
If your mother and father die, do not perform *bhaddar*,
Have nothing to do with those who do not heed this,
Your *hukam* should be accepted and is most true.38|154|

Dohra

Listening to the teaching of Satiguru, fill the heart with love,
Do not give offerings to anyone other than Gurudev.39|155|

Adil

Do not give the offerings of the Creator to anyone else,
Accept the teaching of Satiguru as the truth,
Sit in the true *sangat* and sing Hari's praise,
Only then will [your] destiny be realized,

The *ardas* of the Khalsa is that they should recite the name.40|156|

Dohra

There were Sikhs who humbly accepted [this], and others who did not,
The man who remembers God with affection, there is no one like him.41|157|

Adil

Your entire command is the most true,
One one side, is the Khalsa, whom you support,
One accepts, one not accepting is lost,
There bound at Yama's door, they will call out,
Whatever you do, that becomes true. 42|158|

Dohra

He who immerses himself in worldly pleasure, experiences great fear,
Following a worldly path, forgetting the [ten] Gurus' words. 43|159|

Adil

Whoever forgets the *gurdwara* will have no shelter,
Like a fool enveloped in the distortion of illusion and desire,
Infatuated by such poison, their precious life is wasted,
In the world for just a moment, like the shade of a tree,
The ones who didn't follow the Guru, with ignorant minds they are blind.44|160|

Dohra

Those people in whom the melody of the name arises, they are on the pure path,
Those who praise Gobind with inner faith are the Khalsa. 45|161|

Adil

Guru Gobind Singh is Parabrahma and Parameshvar,
Protecting every heart, spreading happiness,
By reciting the pure name, [such merit] destroys the noose [of death],
They are the Khalsa who have left the *masands*,
They have now manifested in the four directions like the sun and moon.46|162|

Dohra

One manifested as the Khalsa, the other followed this way,
They are lost in darkness and they do not love [the Guru].47|163|

Adil

In a dark well these fools did not find knowledge,
They did not respect virtuous people,
Did not sing the name with love in the heart,
They were enveloped in an expanse of illusion and desire,
Whatever was their destiny, that they received.48|164|

Dohra

In whose heart there is faith, they do not follow meaningless rituals,
[If] they do not meet the assembly of the virtuous, how can they know.49|165|

Adil

He who forgets Hari's name falls into the middle of a river,
They did not reflect on the name with love in their heart,
Forgetting this in the confusion of the world, their life's purpose was not
obtained,
He who remembers Kartar, was liberated,
The Khalsa is at your door, liberate it. 50|166|

Dohra

He who is the creator of the world, they recite [his name] while keeping him in the heart,

Evil thoughts will be erased, the ego will be abandoned, by the majesty of the virtuous ones. 51|167|

Adil

The majesty of virtuous people destroys evil thoughts,

With heart and word, sing the praises of Gobind,

When you are pleased, one's *seva* is successful,

Your praise is endless, and it is very pleasing,

It is impossible to fathom your working, please help me meditate on your feet.52|168|

Dohra

An endless repetition of death and birth in the eighty-four thousand forms,

Without the Guru, one will not find a place, do not let the heart go astray.53|169|

Adil

Whoever turns from the Guru, there is no place for him,

An endless round of rebirth, he will not be liberated,

Wandering in the cycle of existence, he will experience suffering,

Remaining attracted to worldly creation, he is a fool,

He who is not steadfast in Hari's name, will lose all of his acquisitions.54|170|

Dohra

He who becomes a part of the true *sangat*, will abandon sin and disorder,

Meditate on this day and night and all dilemmas in your heart will be resolved.55|171|

Adil

Feeding snakes on milk will not remove their venom,
Putting perfume on a donkey will not prevent him from rolling around in the dust,
Even if dipped in sugar, bitter fruit does not become sweet,
The crooked tail of a dog can not be straightened by any effort.56|172|

Dohra

That man will find ruin, whose heart is filled with pride,
Whoever has no fear in their heart, will be in darkness.57|173|

Adil

He is a fool who doesn't go to the true *sangat* and seeks knowledge from another,
Those who are not scared of the true *sangat*, their minds are filled with pride,
He who doesn't meet the true *sangat*, has squandered his life,
He who doesn't heed the master's *hukam*, the one who has shown the path.
Those who are deceitful, they are incapable of understanding the Khalsa. 58|174|

Adil

If you put seeds in a pot and boil them,
No matter what you do these seeds will not sprout,
In this way a deceitful person can not become a part of the *sangat*,
If union is not in their destiny, they will remain lost in delusion,
Those on whom Satiguru displays favor, nothing can happen to them.59|175|

Dohra

Millions of people searching [for you], your splendor is boundless,
He who has created the entire world, only Kartar knows about that.60|176|

Adil

There is no limit to your name, we cannot fathom it,
Show affection for good people and remove their delusions,
Forgetting your name, where can we go?
The creator is endless, we should sing this day and night,
This is the *ardas* of the Khalsa, place us in your shelter.61|177|

Dohra

I have taken your support, [he] who is all capable,
Prabhu, supporter of all, powerful there is no one like him.62|178|

Adil

Gobind , be merciful, give me the boon of the name,
They are fortunate in this age who recite the name,
All afflictions are removed and blemishes disappear from the body,
That body becomes pure, which is immersed in your love,
That person who destroys pride, [will] find shelter with the virtuous.63|179|

Dohra

Showing favor, Prabhu unite me with God,
The experience of that union cannot be expressed. 64|180|

Adil

Sharing with those on whom you have bestowed your grace,

While others were lost in their confusion,
Others remain fallen in a deep ocean of falsehood,
Others received the name, and accepted the *hukam*,
Others stayed in your presence as you wished.65|181|

Dohra

From the beginning to the end the story of that man is unique,
Describing him one is exhausted as there is no end.66|182|

Adil

You are the true creator, there is no limit to your end,
You the true creator and protector of the world,
Whoever remembers you, in the end you will liberate them,
You have created the world and all of its expanse,
No one can understand your indefatigable play.67|183|

Dohra

The master is eternal, the praise of the master is endless,
Immersed in all of creation, reflect upon this.68|184|

Adil

You yourself are unchanging, you are the only one,
Your praise is endless, your glory true,
The virtuous remember you, sing of your many virtues,
Falling at your shelter, placing my mind at the *darbar*.
The layered created world is filled with only your name.69|185|

Dohra

Why would one have to endure the difficulties of death if they recite the virtues of the creator?

He will be liberated, who keeps this one melody in his heart. 70|186|

Adil

Wherever enemies create trouble, there they will fall into Yama's trap,

The merit of the true name, finding shelter,

Destroying all afflictions and snares,

Destroying transmigration and greed,

O Khalsa, recite the name of Gobind and become the Khalsa. 71|187|

Madhabhar Chhand

Why sorrow, the Khalsa has risen,

It is limitless, a protector. 72|188|

The Guru said this, and everyone listened,

Fixing [these words] in [their] hearts, meditating upon them. 73|189|

Renounce the *masands* [and] break all fetters,

Abandon the company of the five²⁶⁸, absorbed in the one.74|190|

The Khalsa's form, a unique and singular form,

Brandishing the sword [and] fighting in war.75|191|

Diffused in everything, manifest in many ways,

Unexcelled warriors, fighting in battle.76|192|

Wise of the wise, giver of bounty,

Balance of the entire earthly expanse. 77|193|

Enjoying his games, the one he himself plays,

In peerless cities and in their midst.78|194|

²⁶⁸ "*panj mel*," see footnote 31.

Blissful form, the essence of beauty,
He is so blessed, the *kesdhari* Guru.⁷⁹|195|

Thus concludes the account in *Sri Gursobha* of the Rise of the Command.

Chapter Six

Meditation on the Command

Kabitt

Karanhar made a declaration, the good ones meditated upon it,
Why are you becoming enveloped in this dreamlike world?
Abandoning evils, follow Satiguru's advice,
After death, you will not go to Yama's abode.
Do not shave your head O Friends, renounce the *hukka*,
Follow the right path and go to the *sangat* with love.
Knowing this life to be ephemeral, reflect upon this remedy in your mind,
Recite Vahiguru Guru Ji Ka Khalsa.1|196|

Dohra

Then arriving in Delhi, this was told to everyone,
So many accepted this with great affection, but [how] many others did not pay
heed.2|197|
The description of the events that unfolded in the city,
The Karanhar blessed it so that whatever he does, only that happens.3|198|

Chaupai

When the *sangat* came for *darshan*,
This special matter was revealed to them.
A *dharamsala* of wisdom was created there,
Listening to this wisdom with attention, the Sikhs followed it.4|199|
Pahul was given and the entire *sangat* imbibed it,
Five Sikhs bore witness in this.

Both the Khattris and Brahmins remained at a distance,
In their own minds they thought.⁵|200|
‘Though being a Brahmin do not perform *bhaddar*?’
‘Who could achieve praise by taking this path?’
They were lost in a great delusion,
The statement of the Karanhar was ignored.⁶|201|

Dohra

How many listening to this with discrimination in their minds thought,
‘It is not possible for us to break with customary tradition.’ ⁷|202|

Chaupai

How many said that this declaration was too onerous,
We will have to abandon our familial traditions,
How many said this this should not be done,
The Satiguru has not sent a *hukam*.⁸|203|
How many said let something written arrive,
Then this declaration will be followed.
How many listening with affection,
Found a firm place in the *sangat*.⁹|204|
Some hearing it, renounced their families,
Those for whom this teaching was invaluable.
Those who believe that Prabhu is with them,
They should be known as the followers of Prabhu.¹⁰|205|

Dohra

Those who are close to Prabhu, those who possess inner faith,
Without love what can be gained despite the passing of innumerable ages? ¹¹|206|

Chaupai

Whenever the *sangat* comes to the *dharamsala*,
They have a *darshan* of Parabrahma.
There is no difference between the Guru and the *sangat*,
This is how the virtuous people described it to them.12|207|
Have *darshan* and wash away evil thoughts like dirt.,
Knowledge will arise and you will be blessed.
Whatever desire arises in your mind,
Perform *ardas* and immediately you will receive it.13|208|
The majesty of the Khalsa,
Cannot be found anywhere else in the world.
Whoever knows this, will be liberated,
No one can achieve it's position.14|209|

Dohra

The Sikhs seek support in every breath, day and night,
Without the *sangat* for even one moment, they cannot find any peace.15|210|

Chaupai

First, there was one [individual from the] Khatri caste,
The *sangat* held him and gave him this advice.
Holding his hand they made him stand up,
They told him to go to his own house.16|211|
He, the *sirgum* waited there,
First the Sikhs made him get up.
He became extremely agitated,

He said something about untoward.¹⁷|²¹²|
Then he came to see another [fellow caste member],
He came and told him of this matter.
'I have never seen anything like this,
I have never heard of something like this.'¹⁸|²¹³|

Dohra

'These people have treated me this way, holding my hand they made me leave,'
'You, my friend, tell me what should I do?'¹⁹|²¹⁴|

Chaupai

Then the mind of his friend was set in worry,
Now the matter has become intractable.
'Listen brother, nothing can be said [right now],'
'A great clamor has arisen.'²⁰|²¹⁵|
'They would talk ill of everyone,'
'We should listen and stay quiet'
'Keep this firmly in your mind,'
'Let us see what happens in the next few days.'²¹|²¹⁶|
Then he prepared a meal,
Filling the plate, he shared it with his friend.
Finishing the meal there was great satisfaction,
There was great contentment in his [the *sirgum* 's] mind. ²²|²¹⁷|

Dohra

'Why do you worry? Who would dare to expel you?'
'You are reknown in the city and the world knows this.'²³|²¹⁸|

Chaupai

When he ate his food there with him,

Eating the meal he drank water.

Then his mind became calm,

[Now that] This dear friend related something reassuring. 24|219|

Now there was a second one to support him,

All the worries of the body and mind disappeared.

The love for the flame arose,

Just as the moth is burned by it.25|220|

In this way, these two met,

Just as the fish loves water.

If one with lust is attracted to beauty,

He forgets all sense of shame.26|221|

Dohra

As if the heart was immersed in lust day and night,

He abandoned all social decorum and did whatever he wanted.27|222|

Chaupai

When that [friend of the *sirgum*] arrived in the company of Sikhs,

The Sikhs told him they had heard of this matter [his meal with the *sirgum*].

Then they asked him,

‘Why did you eat with him?’ 28|223|

‘He is a *sirgum*, we expelled him,’

‘We sent him away to his house.’

Pressing his hands together he said.

‘Forgive me for my faults.’29|224|

All of the Sikhs met and made a decision,

That they would accept this man back.

‘Now you must not show affection for him,’

‘Whatever we have told you to follow, keep that in your mind.’³⁰|225|

Dohra

Satiguru and the *sangat* are one, everyone knows this,

All blessings and punishment come from him, without him there is nothing.

³¹|226|

Chaupai

When many days had passed,

Many were meeting with great affection.

The story of that matter circulated,

Some heard this and were disturbed.³²|227|

This afforded one Sikh an opportunity,

He then went to the other Sikhs.

All of them told him,

Holding his arms they sent them out. ³³|228|

They sent his other friends as well,

Who also went angrily to their homes.

With great anger in their mind,

All of them gathered and reflected on this. ³⁴|229|

Dohra

‘They did not do the right thing and did not follow any consensus,’

‘Speaking without understanding, they forced some to leave.’ ³⁵|230|

Caulotan Chhand

That man returned to his house, the heat of anger burning his body,
He called many Sikhs, gathering together they sat down.
Sitting he initiated discussion, saying, ‘O Listen what should we do?’
‘We have to live in the middle of everyone, there is no way to discard some,’
‘Death and marriage, familial custom, thinking upon these things, let us mend the
differences.’
Everyone meeting together [immersed in] meditating upon Satiguru, crossed the
far shore.³⁶|231|

Dohra

Day and night remember him, day and night reflect,
Karanhar will liberate the entire word.³⁷|232|

Chaupai

Then he thought about one thing,
Gathering together the entire *sangat*.
Now let us have such a remedy,
Let us clarify this misunderstanding.³⁸|233|
The entire *sangat* along with many others,
Assembled together, all were there.
They decided to have another meeting,
The announcement was made in the city. ³⁹|234|
The entire *sangat* was called to that place,
The whole story of this incident was related to everyone.
The meeting took place in Darapur,
In the *sangat*, the mystery was ascertained.⁴⁰|235|

Dohra

In the Dara bazaar, there was a wonderful fair,
Then two wealthy Khattris made an announcement. 41|236|

Chaupai

‘What you have asked us to believe,’
‘Show this *hukam* that you received.’
‘Smoke the *hukka*, shave your head,’
‘Do whatever pleases you.’ 42|237|
Our conversation occurred in this way,
‘Doing everything that pleases you.’
‘If you accuse others,’
‘No one need to have anything to do with us.’ 43|238|
Upon hearing this everyone became silent.
Meeting them for this matter they reflected upon this news.
‘Dhan Dhan’²⁶⁹ they called, rising with a start.
This news was received well. 44|239|

Dohra

‘Until a written note from Huzoor [Guru Gobind Singh] arrives,’
‘Everyone should remain together and refrain from doing anything
further.’ 45|240|

Chaupai

Then they made this announcement,
The *sangat* gathered there.

²⁶⁹ ‘Blessed, Blessed.’

There was an open discussion,
O Brother, everyone came together.46|241|
On Ekadasi²⁷⁰ when they gathered,
He [That Khatri] gave this teaching to everyone.
'The teachings of the elders that we have received,'
'Follow those in the same way as [you have always done].'47|242|
Listening to this, many thought,
'This is the right thing to do.'
Many said, 'this is not the *rahit*,'
'We don't accept this matter at all.' 48|243|

Dohra

Those who abandoned the *rahit*, they became *khulasa*,
They who do not understand this special declaration, let the creator attend to
them. 49|244|

Chhapai Chhand

What the Karta does, that alone happens, these people have renounced the *rahit*,
Breaking their affection from the true *sangat*, they are infatuated by poison,
Forgetting the words of the Guru, they became *khulasa*,
They do not refer to themselves as Khalsa, and they will reside in Yama's city,
O Friends, reflect on such a thing, and leave all delusions behind,
Whatever the Guru has said, consider that to be the truth. 50|245|

Dohra

The Guru said, O my mind, remember God with love,

²⁷⁰ Eleventh day of the fortnight.

Those fools who did not follow it, pay no heed to their own actions. 51|246|

Kabitt

Forgetting the Khalsa, yet desiring to be liberated,

Know that that will never occur.

Just as a fish will die without water,

One who does not follow the word of the Guru is a fool.

Just as bow without a string will not release an arrow,

Look in your heart and recognize that knowledge.

A life in violation of the *rahit*, is like a fool,

Who hearing of the Guru's teaching does not follow them.52|249|

Dohra

By forgetting the words of Prabhu, you have shown an affection for the
phenomenal world,

Thinking other things in the mind these fools are lost in delusion.53|248|

Savaiyya

Setting aside their modesty, evil has risen in their minds,

Those who have great anger in their hearts, have filled the world with their sins.

Enveloped in false talk, they did that while amidst the true *sangat*,

Those people are always blessed who take only the name as their support.54|249|

Dohra

Renouncing all sensual pleasures, one takes recourse in singular devotion,

Know that birth to be successful that remembers the name day and night.55|250|

Chaupai

Prabhu's name is pure, there people inhabited the seven continents,
Your light fills the nine realms, remembering you, the virtuous ones cannot
adequately praise you.56|251|
Innumerable millions, as many creatures that are in the entire creation, remember
you,
They meditate in mind, speech, and action on Satiguru, through that power they
will not be re-born.57|252|

Tribhangi Chhand

They will not be re-born those who fix their mind, who reflect on the *shabad*, and
who practice devotion,
They who serve that man who is a support, even without understanding they will
swim over,
In this world there is only one man who can grant liberation,
Apart from Karta Prabhu, there is no other one from whom liberation can be
achieved.58|253|

Dohra

Liberator of fallen souls, destroyer of fear, good thoughts about him, the essence
of happiness,
Prabhu is the form of the one who has created the world. 59|254|

Tribhangi Chand

That which Prabhu does occurs, no other can do that,
Whoever all sing [his praises] will obtain the nine treasures that destroy all
suffering,

The whole world knows, the sages accept this, the *ganas* and *gandharvas* serve him,
Such is Prabhu, the Swami, the Antaryami, that the thirty-three million gods are in awe of him.60|255|

Dohra

Remember him in every breath, meditate upon him day and night,
He who commits good deeds, his life is successful.61|256|

Chaupai

Karanhar knows everything, despite the multiplicity of their appearances,
Nothing remains a secret from him, he knows everything without being told.62|257|
The most capable Prabhu relates the teachings, he knows the distress of body and mind,
Prabhu is no other than Puran Karta, without him there is nothing.63|258|

Tribhangi Chand

There is no other besides him in the four directions, he is the one auspicious Purakh,
A *sevak* who sings your praises, acquires the nine treasures, the evil people do not abide by the *rahit*,
As much virtue of his, that much happiness he will receive who sing his praises in the world,
Whatever Prabhu does that comes to pass, his praise is his alone.64|259|
He is unfathomable, beyond knowing, beyond speech,
He uttered the *rahit*, speaking that, that came to pass,
Just as a mute [person] cannot express the taste of sweet delicacies,

In that way, a wise saint remains silent about what he has seen and experienced.

65|260|

Thus concludes the account in *Sri Gursobha* of Meditation on the Command.

Chapter Seven
Rise of the Rahit

Dohra

Whatever Hari Prabhu wishes, he does, good and bad are in his hands,
Without the *sangat* one cannot attain understanding, know this truth.1|261|

Savaiyya

Whoever reflects on the name of Kartar, will be liberated,
In suffering, hunger, happiness, you Prabhu assists in that,
Always compassionate to the poor, omnipresent, without him there is no other,
Those in the world that reflect upon your light, they will achieve liberation.2|262|

Dohra

Taking shelter in the *satsang*, abandon the falsehood of the phenomenal world,
Meditate day and night upon, Udhanhar.3|263|

Chaupai

A Sikh who followed the pure path,
[Who] in his inner state had affection for Satiguru.
Receiving the *hukam*, he left his body,
At the time of his death he was thinking of the Guru. 4|264|
Bhaddar was not performed on him,
His fellow caste members arose with a start.
A great deal of discussion ensued,
All the residents of the city gathered together.5|265|
No one should do business with them,

Remain aloof from familial customs.

Then the leaders²⁷¹ came together,

And recorded these words. 6|266|

Dohra

‘Have no business or familial dealings with them,’

‘Continue to do whatever you were doing.’ 7|267|

Chaupai

This decision was reached by the leaders,

They all reached the conclusion.

‘Let us treat them this way,’

‘We will make sure that their writ does not run.’ 8|268|

‘They have started a new path,’

‘Satiguru hasn’t asked them to do such a thing.’

In this way, they had this written down,

Whoever came to see them, they had them provide this [testimony] in writing.

9|269|

Many wrote [that down] and left it there,

This matter was related to the *sangat*.

Reflecting on this the *sangat* decided,

Tearing these petitions, they were discarded. 10|270|

Dohra

Whatever the *sangat* told them to do, they did only that,

‘We will disregard what you have written on those petitions.’ 11|271|

²⁷¹ The reference is to the *panca*, “the five,” who in the instance, are the leaders of a community council (*pancayat*).

Chaupai

The news spread to the leaders,
That all of the written documents had been torn.
Then they thought and proceeded,
They closed the entire market.¹²|272|
Then they had this petition written by those,
Who suffered for lack of work.
Many went and wrote on this,
They did whatever they were told to do.¹³|273|
How many put their trust in the one [Khalsa],
How many others followed caste traditions.
How many went for *darshan* [to the Guru],
How many came before the ruler.²⁷²¹⁴|274|

Dohra

Many went for *darshan*, others were sad [because they could not go],
Many went before the ruler and lost their faith [in the Guru].¹⁵|275|

Chaupai

Many Sikhs were of this mindset,
So they petitioned the ruler.
Those leaders closed the market,
They asked the ruler if he had ordered that.¹⁶|276|
They established their sway in the market,

²⁷² The ruler's (*hakim*) name is not given but it appears to be a local official.

They would not let them transact any business.
Reflecting the ruler thought of this,
He gave his *hukam* for them to carry on.¹⁷|277|
‘O Brothers, go the market,’
‘Have their stores opened.’
Bearing this command they arrived there.
They showed the command to the those leaders.¹⁸|278|

Dohra

Seeing this all of those leaders were startled,
[They thought] We will not let those stores be opened, no matter what
happens.¹⁹|279|

Chaupai

Gathering, the leaders made this decision,
They closed all the stores in the market.
A large number of them met in the city,
They said, ‘of what type is the Khalsa.’²⁰|280|
‘Now we will see how they react,’
‘How the Khalsa will attain pre-eminence.’
‘We will deal with them in such a way,’
‘That no one will say Khalsa anymore.’ ²¹|281|
Meeting the ruler, they narrated this,
‘These people have started a new path.’
‘They have abandoned the way of familial custom,’
‘They have started following another tradition.’²²|282|

Dohra

‘They all gather and say Vahiguru Ka Khalsa,’

‘Ask them carefully whatever is in their mind.’ 23|283|

Chaupai

‘The Patshah, he is the ruler of Delhi,’

‘They should be saying that they are your Khalsa.’

‘Ask them what constitutes their Khalsa path,’

‘Talk to them in this reasoned way.’ 24|284|

Then the Sikhs explained this matter [to the ruler].

‘Satiguru, is a Mahapurakh, and granter of happiness,’

‘Earlier he had his deputies,’

‘Who were known as *masands*.’ 25|285|

Dohra

‘The Satiguru removed them, [he himself] bearing the most true light,’

‘All of the Sikhs are now the Khalsa, listen to this true fact.’ 26|286|

Chaupai

Then the ruler listened,

Meeting with the Sikhs he said something.

Then he met the leaders and decided,

He gave them a written order. 27|287|

[The leaders to the ruler] ‘Bring them under control once,’

‘And whatever you ask, we will give you.’

Then the ruler took money from them,

He did their bidding. 28|288|

Many Sikhs were arrested,

Hearing of this, others were scared.
Many were mistreated,
The matter became known [in the area].29|289|

Dohra
Meeting the leaders decided to hold a big gathering,
One one side is the Khalsa, on the other is the rest of the world.30|290|

Kabitt
The deeds of the virtuous are protected by you alone,
No other master can take care of this.
The business community and many others from the city,
Came to know that the Sikhs of the Khalsa were being mistreated.
That they [those Khattris] said false things, listening to which there was no peace,
This trembling body takes shelter with you.
Listening to the call of Karanhar without delay,
You are our only support and you will decide this issue. 31|291|

Dohra
Listening, with compassion and mercy, he [Guru Gobind Singh] came to our aid,
The ruler he decided to have the shops opened. 32|292|

Chaupai
Now the market was opened,
Then a truce ensued amongst the Sikhs themselves.
The stores were open and business resumed,
When the anger dissipated there was happiness. 33|293|
Meeting one another there was great peace,

Great amity could be seen.

Then the Sikhs came to the *sangat*,

However many came, their sins were forgiven. 34|294|

Then the Sikhs accepted them back into the *sangat*,

The time came for *darshan* [of Guru Gobind Singh].

The Sikhs came to the Guru's abode [Anandpur] for *darshan*,

With happiness they sang the praises of Prabhu. 35|295|

Dohra

Those who had signed those petitions were all admitted [into the Guru's *darbar*],

Through the Guru's majesty the Sikhs came for *darshan*.36|296|

They came for *darshan*, then it was up to the creator as to what happened next,

Now the story of the description of the battle will begin.3|297|

Thus concludes the account in *Sri Gursobha* of the Rise of the Rahit.

Chapter Eight

The First Battle of Anandpur

Dohra

Gobind Singh's auspicious place is Anandpur,
[There] the *sangat* transformed through *darshan*, experienced the treasure of the
name.1|298|
Many Sikhs departed while others remained [there],
They had prepared for war with trumpets sounding. 2|299|
Those Sikhs that left spread out into numerous towns,
They went into the world and performed many marvelous deeds. 3|300|
Establishing themselves in these cities as the Khalsa,
Following [the Guru] in word and deed, they were peerless. 4|301|
I have related the story of Delhi in detail,
In that manner, there were many other instances in the world.5|302|
Describing the story of Huzoor, meditating on the battle,
Grant me, Karanhar Kartar, power and intelligence. 6|303|
I will now narrate what I have heard from others and what I have myself said,
The Karanhar Kartar is blessed, whatever he desires that transpires. 7|304|

Savaiyya

When the Rajas devised a plan to attack you, Kaladhar,
That idea had taken hold of their hearts, ever since you displayed your weapons
and began to go around on horseback,
Sending a written request to him they said – Guru ji, leave our land at once,
Either pay us tribute or prepare for war. 8|305|

Dohra

Hearing this matter, anger arose in the mind of Satiguru,
In matters of *raj* and *tej*²⁷³, no one is equal to him. 9|306|

Savaiyya

In an angered state, Guru Gobind Singh said, I will not give any tribute,
Who are these ignorant fools who think they are capable of war,
Now these wise ones will receive an answer at the tip of a spear,
Knowing this, destroying their pride, they would not drink the water on their way
back.10|307|

Dohra

The Rajas have come to us Huzoor and have whatever you wish,
Come what may, we will not pay tribute. 11|308|

Adil

The Raja of Kahlur wrote this to Handhur,²⁷⁴
'O Raja, come to my presence,'
'Bring your weapons let us strategize in this way,'
'Encircling in the middle, we will fight.'12|309|

Dohra

Then the Raja of Handur went there,
Whatever you say, we will do that.13|310|

²⁷³ Temporal and spiritual prowess.

²⁷⁴ Nalagarh.

Chhapai Chhand

Then they left Kahlur on their horses,
With their *nishan* in the front, they went along with the army.
The Rajas going by horseback, sword at their waist,
Holding a spear in hand, sword fastened around their torso.
Their shield hanging alongside quiver and arrow,
Departing to fight Prabhu Purakh, these Rajas advanced upon you. 14|311|

Dohra

Then the Raja of Kahlur departed with the standing army,
He left to fight Prabhu Purakh, but he did so in vain. 15|312|

Chhapai Chhand

Rajas on horseback, in the army with drums resounding,
As if on a hunt, accompanied by many people.
The armies arrayed alongside the Rajas,
Then they set up a camp close to Anandpur.
The Rajas organized their armies in such a way,
Surrounding the town on all four sides and cutting its supply lines. 16|313|

Dohra

At that time, Gobind Singh summoned the Singhs,
Giving them swords, he told them to punish those evil ones. 17|314|

Kabitt

Receiving the command of the Guru, drums resounding,

[A]jit Singh²⁷⁵ mounted his horse and left for war.
Taking the Singhs with him, with the *nishan* in front,
Swords fastened [ready] to destroy those enemies.
*Jamdhar*²⁷⁶ fastened, with quiver and arrow,
And a powerful lance to dispatch the enemies.
On the left, a shield, mounted on horseback,
With the power of Guru Gobind Singh on one side, he went to fight the
Rajas.19|315|

Dohra

At the camp of the Rajas, the drums sounded,
Hearing that sound, he thought a great deal. 19|316|

Kabitt

Asking the minister, the Raja said,
‘Tell me how should we wage this battle?’
‘A great deal of blood will be spilt if there is hand to hand battle,’
In this way, he then thought ‘let us make peace.’
A little disturbed, the minister said [to the Raja],
‘After all of these threats the idea of a treaty may not be good.’
‘Give me this command and do not let anything else come in your mind,’
‘You are here and now is the time to attack.’ 20|317|

Dohra

The minister then advised the king to fight,
Fighting is the primary activity of kings. 21|318|

²⁷⁵ Son of Guru Gobind Singh.

²⁷⁶ A twin-blade sword.

Savaiyya

Taking permission from the king, the minister prepared to attack with a single minded zeal,

Countless soldiers surrounded him on all sides,

Each soldier was braver than the next and they arrived [ready for battle],

They dug their trenches and took their positions with great relish. 22|319|

Dohra

At one place where the opposing armies clashed,

The brave ones fought with this music in the background. 23|320|

Savaiyya

Hearing the sound of drums along with the *shenai* and *karnai*,²⁷⁷

There was the playing of the thirty-six *rags* and even the coward forgot his cowardice.

The warriors moved triumphantly, listening to the tune of *Maru*²⁷⁸ they were singleminded in their fighting,

Both sides clashed, killing one another with arrow and musket. 24|321|

Soratha

First they used guns, followed by quiver and arrow,

Then with swords the warriors fought each other. 25|322|

²⁷⁷ A *shehnai* is a reed instruments played during weddings and celebrations, and a *karnai* is a trumpet.

²⁷⁸ A martial *rag*.

Chhapai Chhand

Fighting man to man, watching each other closely,
They did such battle, how can a poetic narrative even describe it?
The gods witnessed this extremely bloody battle,
Sitting in their conveyances, they enjoyed its pace,
A *yogini* stood alongside, awash in blood,
The brave ones won and the Khalsa fought a mighty battle. 26|323|

Dohra

With the majesty of Satiguru, the Khalsa fought,
In the three worlds there is no one equal to these warriors. 27|324|

Kabitt

Vahiguru recognized the fallen, separating them from the others,
People were screaming with pain in the face of this fate.
Killed by the sword, corpse upon corpse fell,
Those killed by arrows never to find equipose.
Those killed by guns, fell off of their horses,
Others were felled by the spear [falling] to the ground.
There was no redemption for those killed by the *jamdhar*,
Bearing five weapons²⁷⁹ the Khalsa fought. 28|325|

Dohra

Arrows, guns, lance unleashing blood there,
And the sword in a fast motion, as well as the *jamdhar* . 29|326|

²⁷⁹ “*panc hathiyar*.”

Chhapai Chhand

The sword moved through the army in this way,
It made two of one, leaving a layer on the ground,
A river of blood flowed where the fighting soldiers fell,
Day turned into night, the wind carried the smell [of death],
The news of this terrible war spread in the three worlds,
The son of Gobind Singh [Jit Singh], fought the Rajas in such a way that they lost
their minds. 30|327|

Dohra

The Rajas lost their minds in the thick of war,
Jit Singh fought in such a way that the Rajas beat their retreat from there. 31|328|

Chaupai

One fought, one ran away hiding,
One a coward displaying great fear.
One was wounded in great pain,
One was decapitated, [his] head rolling around.32|329|
One faced another fighting,
One departing, never to return.
One dying in thirst for water,
One upon seeing the sword, losing his resolve.33|330|
Many fled without their weapons,
Having fallen to the ground from their horses.
Brave warriors facing off, confronting the enemy,
Without wasting any time in dying. 34|331|

Dohra

The warriors fighting in battle, with fearless minds,
They are rare in this world who are equivalent to those brave ones. 35|332|

Savaiyya

The warriors roared in the great [battle] field, just as lightning illuminates the dark clouds,
Just as the moon eclipses [the light] of the stars, Ranjit [Jit Singh] moved in the great [battle]field,
When the sun rises, the night disappears and darkness is dispelled,
Appearing in such a fashion, he [Jit Singh] was a hawk who left fear in the hearts of the Rajas. 36|333|

Dohra

In this way, many days were spent in battle,
The Khalsa established its dominion and the Rajas acceded to them.37|334|

Chaupai

Then the Rajas decided upon this strategy,
Consulting with their ministers.
In that way they made a wager,
There was no other recourse for them. 38|335|
Let us make a request to Satiguru,
And in the process occupy the land.
Taking a cow, the Raja went there,
Leave this place, he appealed.39|336|
Hearing this, Gobind Singh, the provider,
Left that place in this way.

Taking rest at the town of Nirmoh,
He sent the army to destroy the villages.⁴⁰^[337]

Thus concludes the account in *Sri Gursobha* of the First Battle of Anandpur.

Chapter Nine

The Battle of Nirmoh

Dohra

Arriving at Nirmoh, Gobind Singh took rest,
Going to Kahlur, the army raided the surrounding villages. 1|338|

Savaiyya

The army of Gobind Singh descended and surrounded the villages,
Seeing the innumerable people from the hills, many were killed.
There corpse plied upon corpse, with a *yogini* hovering around,
Sahib Chand fighting there, descended with a call to arms on the battlefield.
2|339|

Dohra

With a *yogini* and vultures flying above,
The warriors fought without any fear. 3|340|

Savaiyya

The sound of death filled [the area] where the warriors fought, dyed in blood,
Soldiers fighting their counterparts who, stood firm, fearless and unstoppable.
Falling in the battlefield, reddening the land,
Cowards ran away out of fear with their faces turned. 4|341|

Dohra

Fighting with force in the field, they could not be diverted,
Cutting warriors into two, falling on the ground. 5|342|

Savaiyya

The Khalsa fighting bravely came to Sahib Chand's²⁸⁰ aid,
Every single powerful warrior fought in the battlefield,
Some of the army was destroyed and the rest scattered,
Victorious, the Khalsa lifted Sahib Chand's corpse from the field. 6|343|

Dohra

Bringing the corpse at Nirmoh, they performed its cremation,
He sacrificed his life and became Khalsa, he was a fortunate one. 7|344|

Savaiyya

Many villages were destroyed by the Khalsa,
Now the Rajas realized that the Khalsa had established its authority.
The men in the villages had fled, no one remained there,
They had to devise a remedy, so that the Khalsa would be dispersed immediately
and would not remain there . 8|345|

Dohra

Then the Raja of Kahlur devised a strategy,
He sent his minister to meet the Turks right away. 9|346|

Savaiyya

He went to [meet] the Sultan and said that 'the Khalsa has established its power,'
'They have already captured all of the villages and are ready to attack Kahlur,'

²⁸⁰ Son of the minister Mati Das, a warrior in the Guru's army.

‘No one knows what they will do and all of the people are terrified,’
‘Please help us in our attempts to bring them under control.’ 10|347|

Dohra

Coming to the Turk, he offered this petition,
The Turk said to someone, ‘Now go with him.’ 11|348|

Savaiyya

Then the Sultan said to some else, ‘Go with this man.’
‘Mobilize the *suba* of Sirhind and attack the Sikhs,’
‘If any other Raja is willing to join them, take them and do whatever you can,’
Thinking this, he sent the armies that arrived in Sirhind. 12|349|

Dohra

There was a leader in Sirhind who was deputed by the Sultan,
Taking a great number of forces, he was ready to attack.13|350|

Knowing this to be happening and reflecting upon it,
Coming from different places the *sangat* reached the *darbar*.14|351|
The Guru kept them in his audience and employed them all at the *darbar*,
They were all put on the payroll and outfitted with weapons.15|352|

Adil

On the occasion of Katak²⁸¹ many came for *darshan*,
Having received *darshan*, their bodies were purified,
Everyone was kept there in the presence of Prabhu,

²⁸¹ Katak designates the month of October-November, and also refers to a harvest festival, i.e. Diwali.

Whatever one could do, they were assigned that duty. 16|353|

Dohra

This is all Prabhu's creation and everything happens as he wishes,

No one is equal to those Sikhs in his presence. 17|354|

That entire time Prabhu devised a strategy for a great war,

Those fools do not understand how powerful is Karan Karan. 18|355|

Totak Chhand

Along with their equipment and the powerful Pathans, the angry *subedar* of Sirhind departed,

The huge armies of the Raja of Kahlur marched down,

Gujars and many other ignorant people also came, in innumerable numbers,

Swarming from the four directions, they surrounded the Sikhs like clouds covering the sun. 19|356|

Dohra

They encircled the four directions just as stars surround the moon,

Prabhu was at the center with all others arrayed around him. 20|357|

Savaiyya

Just like a jewel in the ring, a moon surrounded by stars,

Just like a flash of lightning, the Khalsa army shone amongst the others,

When one lion roars all of the animals in the forest run away,

In the same way, there is no equal to the Singhs of the Khalsa in the world.

21|358|

Dohra

The Turks entrenched themselves with outstretched bows,
They all confronted the Khalsa and the battle was about to commence. 22|359|

Savaiyya

When the cannons thundered, fear shook their hearts,
As with the movement of an elephant, the ground underneath shakes,
The edges of their swords shining as if reflecting lightning,
A torrent of blood surged, where the cannon ball found its mark. 23|360|

Dohra

Those people hit by the cannon gave up their lives,
What was in their mind stayed there, not a word was uttered. 24|361|
Like clouds coming in from all directions in a thick cover,
In that way, countless enemies descended from all sides. 25|362|

Savaiyya

Like dark clouds gathering, the army of the enemies arrived from all directions,
Wielding their shining swords in their hands,
Their bows shining as the golden light of the sun illuminates the clouds,
A barrage of arrows was unleashed in the field just as rain falls during Savan.
26|363|

Dohra

The strong arrows released with the skill of Arjun,²⁸²
Whosoever they hit, their breath was cut short. 27|364|

²⁸² An unexcelled archer, he was one of the five Pandava brothers.

Savaiyya

The injured moving around the field, who had fought with full vigor,
Swooning these warriors fell to the earth dishevelled, after fighting with great
energy,
Blood flowing from their bodies, lying next to an embankment of corpses,
Like a dense rain from a cloud, the current of blood ran down from their bodies.
28|365|

Soratha

Leaving behind the world, these brave arrived at the field,
Some were lying in a river of blood, and others walked around wounded in the
battlefield. 29|366|

Savaiyya

[As if] the warriors in the battlefield were like Shyam ji celebrating in the spring,
As if the running warriors were firing pipes of water rather than guns,
A river of blood flowed from those bodies as if dyed in powdered color,
Their bodies were red as if they had been dyed in dark hues. 30|367|

Dohra

Their bodies destroyed, the brave ones were dyed in blood,
Fighting and sprinkling each other as if playing games during Phagun. 31|368|

Savaiyya

Thee warriors fighting in battle just as Shyam enacted his *ras* dance in the forest,
Moving about the battlefield, vultures dancing,
Warriors swaying in the battlefield as if languidly dancing,

As if preparing a wedding bed of blood, the warriors slept as if they had spread
their bedding. 32|369|

Dohra

Spreading out [their] bedding on the earth, laying down without a care,
Stretched out as if sleeping deeply in the night. 33|370|

Savaiyya

Warriors playing in the battlefield,
Seeing this flow of blood, a *yogini* filled her bowl,
Feasting upon the warriors fallen to the ground,
Fallen as if a current of wind had moved through and felled trees. 34|371|

Dohra

The weight of these fallen warriors was too much for the earth to bear,
A *yogini* filled her pitcher from the flow of blood. 35|372|
These great warriors fought for twenty hours,
Seeing this army of the Turks advance, Satiguru thought. 36|373|

Savaiyya

Leaving the battlefield of Nirmoh, crossing the river to the other side,
None of the great warriors were able to keep their resolve,
With their anger rising the Pathans returned again to battle in the river,
Without any fear, they fought and gave up their bodies. 37|374|

Dohra

In four hours the sun rose and light fell upon the field,
Many warriors died there and they thought of this. 38|375|

Savaiyya

Taking refuge with Prabhu, there is no other way to be saved,
The great one enacted this play, you remain lost in delusion, but he kept his
honor,
All of this creation under a delusion, he saved us from slandering each other,
Let all know that we should pray to Prabhu, ‘save us, we are your slaves.’ 39|376|

Dohra

After protecting his territory, Prabhu reflected,
We have repulsed this army of powerful Turks. 40|377|

Savaiyya

The mighty Guru Gobind Singh destroyed the army of the Turks,
This happened according to Prabhu’s plan, they all ran away never to return,
The Raja of Bisali came to meet him and with folded hands proclaimed himself
his servant,
[He said] ‘Come to my territory, Prabhu, and establish your camp there.’ 41|378|

Thus concludes the account in Sri Gursobha’s of the Battle of Nirmoh.

Chapter Ten

The Battle of Bisali and Kalmot

Dohra

Arriving there, the entire Khalsa took rest,
The large armies of Kahlur [also] arrived on the opposite side. 1|379|

Savaiyya

Then again, a great war ensued as they attacked each other in battle,
All of the brave warriors and kings confronted each other screaming,
Throwing discs, firing muskets and unleashing spears,
Guru Gobind Singh sat and watched the fight of elephants from an open window.
2|380|

Dohra

Warriors running towards one another, fighting like elephants,
Their gait shook the earth, [rushing towards each other] shouting in delight. 3|381|

Savaiyya

As steel clashed with steel, the light of steel came like a flash,
Just as lightning in the sky shines during Savan,
A melody arose there as if lightning was cracking on a hill,
In that dense fighting, swords flashing like lightning in the clouds. 4|382|

Dohra

Guns firing and arrows whizzing past,
As if the light of the sun pierced through the clouds.5|383|

Savaiyya

Swelling in the four directions, the Khalsa fought in such a way,
Seizing them from the flank, they destroyed that army,
They sent such a storm of arrows that many fell to the ground as if taking rest,
The vile army of Kahlur full of arrogance fled that place. 6|384|

Dohra

The entire army of Kahlur fled, became irresolute,
Like an arrow flies after leaving the bow. 7|385|
Those men full of vanity, wandered in delusion,
Those who remembered [the Guru] with affection, received full support. 8|386|

Kabitt

You have manifested light in the four directions,
It is your light that is reflected in the sun and moon.
Karanhar dwells within all of the creation,
You are immanent in all.
Whosoever serves you, the embodiment of beauty,
Seeing your lotus feet, that person achieved liberation.
Destroying all sin, reciting Prabhu's name night and day,
You alone are visible in the four directions. 9|387|

Dohra

There is nothing equal to the power of the name,
It is omnipresent in the creation from every side. 10|388|
Spending many days in Bisali in rest,
They hunted for sport, and rested afterwards. 11|389|

Kabitt

Referring to it as sport, is the play of Karanhar,
At the time of war, the sound of *naubat* played.
Those prideful residents of Kalmot,
Surrounding the Sikhs, they came into view.
Many Sikhs had remained behind,
In battle with them many were wounded.
Going to Huzoor, the Sikhs reported to the Master,
And the Sahib went at once and surrounded Kalmot. 12|390|

Dohra

Then the Khalsa came and surrounded Kalmot,
From two sides, a huge gunshot rang. 13|391|

Savaiyya

The army of Gobind Singh rose, no one could fathom their power,
Surrounding the fort of Kalmot, while firing the musket,
Unleashing bloodshed, warriors who ran forward were killed,
They were wounded and felled. 14|392|

Dohra

Their homes in danger, everyone became anxious and ran,
Unable to keep hold of their senses, their bodies shaking with fear. 15|393|
The *nishan* of Gurudev was raised on the fort,
The victorious sound of *naubat* rang out and all the enemies fled. 16|394|

Savaiyya

Again, for the purpose of war, the residents of Kalmot assembled,
As they ran on the ground, it was like a powerful storm blowing.
They created an army formation and seeing them, all were nervous,
These ignorant people were unaware of Prahbu. 17|395|

Dohra

Gathering, the people of Kalmot sought some comfort,
Coming close to Kalmot many arrows were unleashed. 18|396|
Someone told Sahib that the army had returned,
Karan Karan gave the command to wait for the morning. 19|397|
In this way the whole night passed with countless arrows moving past,
No one was hit by any arrows, Kartar protected everyone. 20|398|
When day came, the sun emerged,
At that time, [the Sahib] sent the Khalsa forth with great love. 21|399|

Savaiyya

The army of Gobind Singh ran forward like hawks attacking sparrows,
The Singhs created such a disturbance, the Singhs of the Khalsa subjugated all
others,
Seeing their brilliance, the ignorant were filled with fear,
They were not able to hold their position on the field, they ran like an arrow
leaving the bow. 22|400|

Dohra

Leaving the field at Kalmot, those fools ran away,
Accepting the victory of Prabhu Purakh, the Rajas accepted his protection.23|401|
Prabhu came to meet the Raja at the fort of Kahlur,

They offered their submission at the feet of Satiguru. 24|402|

The Khalsa of Satiguru grew in strength,

Coming to Bisali, Satiguru Puran Purakh. 25|403|

You are the cause of creation and destruction,

Then he built Anandgarh and extended his rule. 26|404|

Thus concludes the account in *Sri Gursobha* of the Victory of Bisali and Kalmot.

Chapter Eleven

The Second Battle of Anandgarh

Dohra

Once again, they inhabited Anandgarh, the Rajas accepted his authority,
Marching from Bisali, Prabhu returned to this territory. 1|405|
Having a daily *darshan*, the Khalsa is eternally happy,
Performing *seva* to Satiguru with love in their heart. 2|406|
The Khalsa came to that place from cities far and wide,
Seeing Prabhu Purakh, no delusion remained. 3|407|
The nearby villagers, were all under the control of the Khalsa,
Over two years were spent in this way. 4|408|

Chaupai

Then the Khalsa did the following,
They went on horseback to the surrounding villages.
Those who met them with offerings,
Were left in peace. 5|409|
Those who did not make offerings,
The Khalsa forcefully took it [from them].
News of this spread far and wide,
Then the Rajas reflected. 6|410|
Our rule has become ineffective,
The reign of Satiguru has spread in the four directions.
That thought occurred to the Rajas,
They summoned people from different places. 7|411|

Dohra

Then the Rajas summoned the army,
Amassing all of the armies, they arrived near [Anandgarh]. 8|412|
Then they sent a message – Heed this Gharib Nivaz,
Leave Anandgarh today, this will be best for everyone. 9|413|
Prabhu then commanded for preparations to be made,
Placing fortifications at different places, the fighting began. 10|414|
Convening, the Rajas divided up the positions in such a way,
From the four directions, the army began the attack. 11|415|

Savaiyya

Releasing a mighty roar, the cannon sounded and every heart trembled as if
lightning had sounded,
[The cannon fire] fell whosoever was near, their chests were split open,
When the cannon fired, the brave warriors were felled by its force,
The Rajas were terrified when the canon was fired from Anand[garh]. 12|416|

Dohra

Whoever was touched by the cannon ball was killed instantly,
Whatever was in their mind remained there, no word could be uttered. 13|417|

Savaiyya

The noise of releasing arrows created such a sound on the battlefield,
The soldiers on horseback were routed and felt no peace as they fell down,
In this way, the field resembled strewn burnt wood in the forest,
In this way, falling and screaming many were killed in a moment. 14|418|

Dohra

Cannon, arrow, bullets firing, innumerable arrows released,
Just like the unceasing rain of Savan, bestowing liberation. 15|419|
Sitting on horseback, the Singhs rushed forward and attacked the army,
Killing them there in that way they uprooted the Rajas. 16|420|
Many Rajas who were considered excellent warriors were killed there,
Assembling the Rajas reflected on what should be done with Kartar. 17|421|
'The Singhs are many and they are unsurpassed warriors,'
'They have killed many brave and strong warriors on the battlefield.' 18|422|

Chaupai

The Rajas fleeing, went to the Turks,
They related everything to them.
'Now please come to our aid,'
'Help us capture Anandgarh.' 19|423|
Gathering, the Turks departed,
Getting themselves together they arrived immediately.
Many Mughals and Pathans joined in,
Armed with weapons, chewing on *pan*²⁸³. 20|424|
With many Gujars and Ranghars as well,
Many great warriors on horse.
With the company of those from Sirhind,
Requesting for armies from the fort of Lahore. 21|425|
Many armies came together, along with an army from Jammu,
All of the Rajas joined their armies together and arrived there again. 22|426|
Hearing this news the Karan Karan then gave a command,

²⁸³ Betel leaf, an intoxicant.

Preparing fortifications they established themselves. 23|427|

Arrows and bullets descended like torrential rain.

Behind there, a group of warriors held their swords. 24|428|

Savaiyya

When the Singhs charged the battlefield they fought in a perfect way,

Charging forward with shining swords, when they clashed the trumpets sounded.

When the arrows were unleashed, helplessly these warriors left their bodies,

Creating havoc in the four directions, those brave warriors fought there in this way. 25|429|

Dohra

One group was involved in a headlong confrontation,

The others approached from behind unsuccessfully. 26|430|

Chaupai

In this way all of the warriors fought,

These armies attacked one another.

The brave warriors fought one another,

Wreaking havoc with their weapons. 27|431|

Such bloodshed took place there,

Fathers could not recognize their sons.

Many warriors battled there,

One wounded warrior fell down behind. 28|432|

One warrior arose and ran forward,

There was no delay in his death.

Some retreated, others lay wounded,

Others were mortally wounded. 29|433|

Dohra

Some retreated, others lay wounded,
Some lay dead, another fighting in battle, fell losing his senses. 30|434|
Seeing this the Rajas said, ‘What do we do with Kartar?’
‘The Singhs have fought valiantly and there is no respite in sight.’ 31|435|

Chhapai Chhand

The Singhs fighting in the army, rushing forward and attacking,
Decapitating heads and dashing them to the earth, they returned,
In this way these warriors created havoc on the battlefield,
In quick succession, corpse fell upon corpse,
Watching from this attack from behind, the Rajas retreated,
They mounted their horses and retreated. 32|436|

Dohra

Crying they prayed and promised,
‘We will not return if we survive this.’ 33|437|
‘Leaving the villages of Kahlur we will go and settle somewhere else.’
‘We will leave the Mughals and fly away as if we had wings.’ 34|438|
Many days passed with the fierce battle continuing,
Then the Rajas convened in an assembly and made future plans. 35|439|
The Turks said to the Rajas, ‘There is no other option,’
‘But to blockade them and wait it out.’ 36|440|

Chaupai

[Along with] Gujar, Ranghar, and Pathan,
The Rajas descended from the four directions.

Circling the city in this way,
Blocking all of the supply routes. 37|441|
No one was permitted to come through,
No one could cross those roads.
Many days passed in this way,
Grain was sold for one *rupee* per *ser*. 38|442|
Four Sikhs went to get water,
Two fought while the other two collected the water.
This was the ruse designed by Prabhu,
Seeing this situation, the people were frightened. 39|443|

Dohra

In this way, a calamity unfolded there [in Anandgarh],
Whatever people had in the house they ate only that. 40|444|

Chaupai

The price of things became quite steep,
It was difficult to find anything.
Seeing these soldiers gathered together,
Thinking to themselves that. 41|445|
Some Singhs should do this,
At night they should ambush the army.
Fighting and taking things from there,
Placing the bundle [of food] upon their heads. 42|446|
Many battles were waged,
How many times they left from there with a bundle.
In this way, they brought a lot of food inside,
Many days were passed in this way. 43|447|

Dohra

In this activity the warriors passed many of their days,
When provisions ran out, they went back there. 44|448|
Then the Rajas secured that food supply,
Day and night their army kept watch. 45|449|

Chaupai

Then the army saw those Singhs,
Now they had to devise a new strategy.
Now there is no way, how will we go there?
Which route should we take to procure grain? 46|450|
We will have to fight in battle and take a chance,
Now turning back [there] was no [other] option.
The Singhs clashed with the army,
Rushing forward they fought. 47|451|
Corpses falling upon corpses,
Then the Rajas considered this.
Gathering together they rushed forward,
In all directions, the anger of warriors rising. 48|452|

Dohra

Fighting in this way day broke and the Rajas did this,
The army looming in the four directions, the Singhs were surrounded. 49|453|

Chaupai

Armies visible in four directions,
With cries of bloodshed they advanced.

Striking with fierce blows,
The Singhs fought with a battle cry. 50|454|
Arrows rained down in torrents,
The cannon fired and passed through that body.
Struck by the sword, leaving the mortal frame behind,
The arrows reached their targets without delay. 51|456|
Such fierce fighting ensued,
Innumerable corpses piled on to one another.
The Khalsa recited [the name of God] without thought of an other,
All of those Singhs fought and died at that place. 52|457|

Dohra

Then the Sikhs met and presented a request to Satiguru,
The Singhs have gone to procure food and have given their lives. 53|458|
The Satiguru said, why did they go without his permission,
All of those who died fighting were liberated. 54|459|
Their waists were tied [with their bows], they were happy to be in the presence of
the Guru,
They ate what the Satiguru gave them. 55|460|
Through day and night they circled the area,
Keeping watch in this way, no thieves could pass. 56|461|

Chaupai

In this way, many days passed,
The residents of the city came [to Anandgarh].
In front of the entrance there was an appeal,
Without food we will certainly die. 57|461|
See our present condition,

Nothing but skin covering bones.
Without food there is no life,
This was everyone's state from morning to evening. 58|462|
Yet everyone in the city remained firm,
Then Prabhu said the following.
'Pass some more days like this,'
'You will have your choice of food then.' 59|463|

Soratha

'If we leave Anandgarh there will be a big battle,'
'Many Singhs will die there.' 60|464|

Dohra

Then the Sikhs said, 'Nothing bad will transpire,'
'Let us abandon Anandgarh, this is the best option.' 61|465|

Chaupai

Satiguru said, 'Listen to me,'
'If something unfortunate happens, this will be your responsibility.'
He asked them to put their request in writing,
And then commanded them to prepare to leave. 62|466|
The residents made preparations,
Carrying their valuables with them.
They prepared for their departure,
Carrying their belongings on their head. 63|467|
The Sahib also prepared for departure,
The treasury was divided amongst the Sikhs.
All of them tied their five weapons,

The brave Singhs were fully prepared. 64|468|

Dohra

Everything left behind was burnt,

Without any delay, they left Anandgarh. 65|469|

Thus concludes the account in *Sri Gursobha* of the Second Battle of Anandgarh.

Chapter Twelve

The Battle of Chamkaur

Dohra

Through Satiguru's grace, I can relate this great battle,
As per my capability, I describe the great deeds of the[se] warriors. 1|470|
When [the Guru] was standing on the hillock,
The Raja and Turks moved closer in their pursuit. 2|471|
Uday Singh²⁸⁴ pleased Kartar by offering to challenge the enemy,
That life is successful which is spent battling against enemies.3|472|
Leaving behind Uday Singh, the Guru moved ahead,
Stopping at a garden near Chamkaur, they rested. 4|473|
Receiving this news, the local chief of Chamkaur,
Rushed there immediately. 5|474|
With folded hands he requested Kartar,
'Please come to the center of the village.' 6|475|
On horseback, then Sahib left the garden,
The Singhs all accompanied him and arrived in Chamkaur. 7|476|
Then the enemies received the news [through their spies],
That the Singhs had arrived in Chamkaur.8|477|
These foolish spies spread this news everywhere,
Uday Singh stayed behind, now listen with care. 9|478|
The Rajas and Turks arrived nearby,
Uday Singh fell upon them without delay. 10|479|

²⁸⁴ Son of Mani Singh and warrior in the Guru's army.

Jhulna Savaiya

When he rushed onto the battlefield, he killed many cavalrymen,
Corpses fell down as if a dyer had spread clothes on the ground for drying,
Reddened by blood as if dye had been applied,
It was as if a current of wind descended and uprooted strong trees. 11|480|

Dohra

For three hours he kept the enemy at bay,
Then Uday Singh died fighting, remembering Satiguru. 12|481|

Savaiyya

Accompanied by many Singhs armed with weapons they fought with great force,
Some armed with swords, some handling spears, shouting battle cries they rushed forward,
Someone stretching his bow, unleashed his mortal arrows with precision,
Killing so many men as if building a mountain of corpses, the Singhs fought.
13|482|

Dohra

Fighting for three hours, the Singhs killed many there,
While fighting all of these warriors kept Satiguru in their mind. 14|483|
Then seeing them fall, the army was surprised,
They looked for Karan Karan all around. 15|484|
In the meantime many spies came from Chamkaur,
Everyone prepared for the battle and arrived there. 16|485|
Establishing their trenches as soon as they arrived,
Right there, the war started with the roar of a gun. 17|486|
Surrounded on four sides by those forces, in the middle stood Gobind Singh,

Shining like the moon surrounded by stars. 18|487|
All of the armies arrived, standing there,
Surrounded on four sides with no escape route. 19|488|

Savaiyya

Like dense clouds gathering in the directions, the warriors of these armies arrived,
Chamkaur was completely surrounded, no road was passable,
Seeing the swarming armies on four sides, the Singhs rose to fight,
Then with a mind focused on Satiguru, the the Sikh soldiers fought
happily. 20|489|

Everyone said that the warriors of Guru Gobind have gathered,
Holding their weapons these great warriors descended upon the field,
Coming together with pleasure, there was no occasion for fear,
They were confident that Prabhu would take care of them and they fought
bravely. 21|490|

Roaring the Singhs rushed forward onto the field displaying their weapons,
Some armed with swords, the *jamdhar*, spears, guns, and others unleashing
arrows,
Warriors brandishing these five weapons, felled many warriors in battle,
There was great fear at that time as the Singhs appeared as the form of death
itself. 22|491|

Chaupai

Descending upon these armies,
All of the Singhs did thus.
These sounds of steel resounded,
Quickly the melody of battle sounded. 23|492|
Falling to the earth with a great thud,

Many warriors died fighting there.
One wounded fell down delirious,
Others died an instantaneous death. 24|493|
One ran away never to return,
Other warriors fought face to face.
In this way the Singhs fought unexcelled,
As if intoxicated, they fought with abandon. 25|494|
Felled by bullets,
Their clothes and limbs reddened by blood.
In four directions, their swords shone,
Unleashing arrows, unassailable in battle.26|495|
There felled by bullets that passed through the body,
As if a great rain poured down.
All of the Singhs fought together,
The Khalsa continuously reciting [God's name].27|496|

Dohra

Then, Karan Karan called over one Singh [Ajit Singh],²⁸⁵
He told him to dispatch the enemies. 28|497|
With folded hands, he requested, 'O Kartar, do me this favor,'
'Please watch me fight in this mighty battle.'29|498|

Savaiyya

Acceding to this request, he sent Ranjit to destroy those enemies,
Pleasing Gurudev at that time, he went into battle surveying the forces around
him,

²⁸⁵ Guru Gobind Singh's son, he is referred to as Ranjit, Ajit, and Jit in this text.

With a loud battle cry, the army saw him arrive,
Then the Turks encircled him and fought a mighty battle. 30|499|

Chhapai Chhand

That day when Ranjit stood like a pillar in the earth and fought,
The earth shook and the sun was eclipsed,
The wind stopped and night turned into day,
The heavens trembled with the sound of those cannons,
The sound of drums filled the three worlds and filled the minds of the gods,
Alighting upon their conveyances, they all came, including Shiva, to see this
battle. 31|500|

Dohra

Then a *yogini* came and Narad's trumpet resounded,
Jit Singh returned to the battlefield. 32|501|
Seeing the army in four directions, he grabbed his bow,
Unleashing arrows like the falling rain during Savan. 33|502|
Whoever was touched by his arrow died,
Felled by the sword, many Pathans fell. 34|503|

Chhapai Chhand

Holding his bow mightily,
Whoever he hit in the chest, that arrow pierced their armor,
Felled in this way, they maintained their honor,
Forgetting their worldly concerns, they lost all sense,
In this way, Jit Singh killed many Pathans,
Leaving aside his bow, he fought with many other weapons. 35|504|

Dohra

Rushing at the army,
Felling those on horseback in a moment. 36|505|

Savaiyya

When Ranjit went into battle he fought with such unexcelled skill,
Corpse fell upon corpse, and blood flowed as if out of a pipe,
Holding a spear with great vigor, immediately killing everyone at that place,
Lifting these weapons with such strength, many fell to the earth. 37|506|

Dohra

Witnessing the death of these Pathans in battle,
Seeing this everyone recited ‘Khuda Khuda.’²⁸⁶ 38|507|

Savaiyya

Seeing Ranjit fighting in this way, the armies cried, ‘Vah Vah,’²⁸⁷
Ranjit Singh killed many enemies with his spear, lining the edge of the field with
corpses,
Flowing like a endless river of blood in the field,
His horse turned around with great agility, with a shield in his hand he killed
many. 39|508|

Dohra

Jit Singh fighting in all four directions,
Leaving aside his bow, he grabbed his spear. 40|509|

²⁸⁶ Khuda is a common epithet for God used in the Islamic tradition.

²⁸⁷ ‘Great, Great.’

Savaiyya

When his spear fell upon the earth broken into two pieces, he killed many with his sword,

Severing many heads into two and four pieces,

All flowing in a river of blood,

Felled with no trace of sense or consciousness, everyone was senseless in the field. 41|510|

Dohra

There was great fighting at the village near Chamkaur,

Fighting they held their positions. 42|511|

In his way, Ranjit Singh fought well,

Those great warriors fought in this way. 43|512|

Savaiyya

Fighting with resolve, Ranjit destroyed the leaders of the armies,

Brandishing a sword and attacking, bodies fell upon the ground,

Like a river of blood flowing with corpses lining its edge,

Treading the field with their horses, they fought with great strength. 44|513|

Dohra

The brave warrior fought in battle with his sword,

He killed these great warriors, the leaders of their armies. 45|514|

Dohra

Then the armies gathering together closed in from the four directions,

Ready for battle they approached. 46|515|

Savaiyya

Then seeing them there he seemed was prepared as if ready to play Holi,
With the clashing of spears, swords, arrows, and guns, blood flowed freely,
Everything glistening as if colored by red powder,
As if a garden full of red flowers finally comes to bloom. 47|516|

Dohra

Their bodies completely covered in blood,
Sprinkled in color as if it was the season of spring. 48|517|

Savaiyya

A *yogini* arrived and waited there with her bowl, eager for Ranjit's blood.,
Apart from you who fought such a battle, who could satiate her appetite?
Vultures circling and Narad danced, there an incalculable number of warriors had
fallen,
There was heavy fighting in the middle of Chamkaur. 49|518|

Dohra

Hit upon horseback, that mighty warrior engaged in this excellent work,
Drinking from the cup of love²⁸⁸, he became one with God. 50|519|
At that time Gobind Singh said,
'Ranjit has achieved the special status of the Khalsa in Satiguru's *darbar*.' 51|520|

Savaiyya

As if enacting the *ras* of Hari ji in the forest, there they all stood on the battlefield.
With the sound of drums creating a melody,

²⁸⁸ "*pyala prem ka.*"

Together, the warriors played the games of spring and danced in the *ras*,
Spreading out a carefree bed made of blood, these warriors fell down into a deep
slumber. 52|521|

Dohra

At that time their hearts were fixated on his lotus feet,
Reciting Vahiguru, they faced their final moments.53|522|

Savaiyya

Though [these things] appeared on the surface, no one can fathom the extent of
Prabhu's ways,
They died or disappeared in some direction, no one knows where,
No one could count how many corpses had fallen there,
Even meditating upon this without end, they still wouldn't be able to understand
anything. 54|523|

Dohra

Then when Jujhar Singh²⁸⁹ saw that the time had come,
He rushed forward into battle holding his bow. 55|524|

Savaiyya

He, the strong warrior, rushed the army unleashing his arrows,
Those who were hit in battle fell down in great pain,
Corpses plied upon corpses, a *yogini* came to fill her bowl,
Fighting in this way the battlefield became reddened.56|525|

²⁸⁹ Guru Gobind Singh's son.

Chhapai Chhand

Holding the bow and unleashing arrows,
Whoever's heart it pierced died without delay,
Those on horseback were felled,
Whoever was hit by an arrow died on the spot,
Killing so many Pathans, the four directions were filled with corpses,
It is not possible to account for all of those killed by Jujhar [Singh]. 57|526|

Dohra

Seeing the army approaching from all four directions,
Then grabbing a lance without delay. 58|527|

Kabitt

He circled his hand with a lance,
Heads were strung upon it as flowers in a garland.
Woven in a garland exuding the fragrance of sandalwood,
Diffusing with every pulsation of wind.
Touching them [heads], weaving them,
Causing them to fall [off of their bodies].
The unending flow of blood was overwhelming,
In which those dead bodies drowned.59|528|

Savaiyya

That warrior fought in that way and killed so many,
Seeing him, many horseriders were scared and fell off their horses,
Calling out with battle cries, everyone fired their arrows and guns,
Grabbing his sword, the Singh ran into battle.60|529|
Fighting in the field, nobody could face this warrior,

With sword in hand, attacking and cutting the enemy into two pieces,
Corpses plied upon corpses, a current of bloody wind was blowing,
Killing them by sword, Jujhar Singhs fought in such a way that the trumpets were
sounded. 61|530|

Savaiyya

He rushed into the army with sword in hand as if he was greeting those warriors,
Those who carried swords in their hands, lost their heads by his hand,
While battling, many warriors closed in on him,
Seeing this, Jujhar Singh pondered over what he could do with the help of
Prabhu.62|531|

Then Zoraver Singh²⁹⁰ came to the battlefield,
Killing many in the army, splitting them into pieces,
Moving from here to there, in the center of everything without fear,
Fighting with those warriors with spears, lances, arrows, and swords. 63|532|

Kabitt

Pulling on their swords, he made them fall on the ground,
Those riders fell with a thud to the ground in front of him.
Falling unconsciously and helplessly,
Like pigeons in front of a hawk.
He killed those riders with his sword,
As the leaves fall in the face of a storm.
There is no way to fathom his actions,
Zoraver Singh killed many warriors. 64|533|

²⁹⁰ Guru Gobind Singh's son.

Dohra

They left to confront the army,
Intervening on Zoraver's behalf, Prabhu asked Kartar to protect him.65|536|
Then Sant Singh²⁹¹ seized his sword,
Running toward the army he didn't return.66|535|

Kabitt

Challenging from such close quarters,
Killing these soldiers, felling them in battle.
The Singhs fighting with sharpened swords,
Shining like flashes of lightning.
Arrows raining down, pricking the body,
Like the hair on the body.
The fighting was unyielding,
[These men fighting] as if flowers swinging in a garden.67|536|

Savaiyya

Fighting with fervor in the battlefield,
Holding swords on horseback and felling those enemies to the ground,
Alighted upon their horses decorated with glorious saddles, killing many enemies,
Many injured on the battlefield with blood flowing from their bodies. 68|537|

Dohra

Reciting 'Khalsa Khalsa' there was no reliance upon another,
Reciting 'Vahiguru' Sant Singh gave up his life. 69|538|
So many warriors fought there, such peerless warriors,
Grabbing their bows upon horseback. 70|539|

²⁹¹ Warrior in the Guru's army.

Savaiyya

Grabbing their bows and arrows, preparing the army they rushed forward,
Unleashing lethal arrows without delay, sounding a melody,
At that time Prabhu performed a miracle when an enemy attacked him,
Due to Prabhu's intervention, the arrow flew past at a finger's distance.71|540|

Dohra

Prabhu created a plan to go in some other direction,
But no one saw Prabhu leaving. 72|541|

Savaiyya

Whatever armies remained they gathered and rushed toward Chamkaur,
The *sahibzadas* were captured and brought to Sirhind,
Jujhar Singh responded to the Turks sharply and annoyed them,
Then, due to Prabhu's grace, both of the *sahibzadas* departed for their heavenly
abode.73|542|

Dohra

Blessed are the sons of Gurudev who showed no attachment to their bodies,
They protected *dharam* in the Kaliyug, giving pride to their grandfather [Guru
Tegh Bahadur].74|543|
Fateh Singh and Jujhar Singh gave their lives,
The three worlds knew of their sacrifice. 75|544|

Thus concludes the account in Sri Gursobha of the Battle of Chamkaur.

Chapter Thirteen

Mystery of God

Dohra

The unparalleled way of Nirankar infuses the world,
Destroying everything in a moment, there is only *ekonkar*. 1|545|

Savaiyya

When Kartar left Chamkaur, assuming another appearance he departed in different direction,
Leaving aside wealth, home, sons, and wives in this way residing in *ekonkar*,
Abandoning all possessions in an instant, he assumed the form of a *sannyasi*,
Gobind Singh again fashioned the world and reset the earth and the sky. 2|546|

Dohra

Nirankar having manifested, had one wish,
And Kartar appeared in to liberate the world. 3|547|
Gobind Singh is the powerful Prabh, Karan Karavanhar,
As the Kaladhari manifesting great joy in all four directions.4|548|

Savaiyya

In age after age, assuming a form in order to destroy enemies,
Illuminating the four directions with his great light in order to destroy all of the evil in the world,
Reciting the name Khalsa, Hari bestowed upon them beautiful weapons for battle,
Guru Gobind Singh enacted this play in order to help people cross over the ocean of existence. 5|549|

Chaupai

Prabhu assumed these myriad forms,

In order to liberate souls.

Then Prabhu arrived in the land of the Brars,²⁹²

All of the Sikhs who came for *darshan*. 6|550|

Destroying lifetimes of sin,

Those who saw the unassailable Prabhu.

Worries, concerns, and suffering were removed,

When the Guru gave *darshan*. 7|551|

He destroyed the cycle of transmigration and created virtue,

Such was his gift.

That evil deeds were abandoned and one became pure,

For those Sikhs who took refuge with Satiguru. 8|552|

Dohra

Like a boundless lake overflowing with water,

There Gobind Singh built an encampment. 9|553|

Savvaiya

Gobind Singh establishing that place, reverberating a fearsome sound struck,

The Singhs there day and night, the sounds of *gurbani* and [*rag*] *maru*,

Hearing the recitation of the battle in poetic meter, the warriors were filled with happiness,

Hearing shouts of victory resounding through the three worlds, fourteen realms, warriors trembled. 10|554|

²⁹² Historically, the Brars were inhabitants of the Malwa area which falls across the Satluj river on the border of Rajasthan.

Savaiyya

Hearing about Prabhu, the enemies again prepared their armies for attack,
Seeing such a thing, they arrived with army to battle,
The Singhs encircled in four directions, other Singhs came to their rescue,
The warriors unleashed great destruction, and in hand to hand combat many were
killed. 11|555|

Savaiyya

Like a farmer tilling the land, they razed the earth,
Brandishing their swords like sticks hitting heads as if they were pots, the beloved
warriors of Gobind Singh reveled,
Many corpses lay scattered as if leaves felled by the wind,
Such fierce fighting occurred, fleeing the enemies were killed and sent off to
heaven. 12|556|

Savaiyya

Fleeing the Turks abandoned the field, and control fell to the Singhs,
The Kartar considered that he should relate this event to their king [Aurangzeb],
Then deputing Daya Singh²⁹³, Kartar dispatched him,
Submitting to that order, fastening it to his turban, he went from there. 13|557|

Savaiyya

Then the Kartar explained that this letter must reach Aurang[zeb]'s hand,
By my command I am with you, do not let any doubt arise in your mind,

²⁹³ One of the five beloveds (*panj pyare*) of the Guru.

Take five or so Khalsa with you, take money for the passage from the treasury,
The *farman* was quickly prepared that was to be taken to the Shah.²⁹⁴ 14|558|

Dohra

With his immediate departure, he lowered his head in front of Prabhu,
Dressed as a messenger, that Singh departed from there. 15|559|

Bhujang Prayat Chhand

Dressed as a messenger he left quickly,
Crossing through many villages,
Moving with haste as if involved in an expedition,
After some days they reached Delhi. 16|560|
Meeting the true *sangat*, great happiness was experienced,
Taking out the *hukam*, they were protected,
Taking money from those who were asked to give,
Departing he did this work. 17|561|
Arriving in Agra he attended to many things,
Leaving the Chambal²⁹⁵ he went to Guler,²⁹⁶
The best of men²⁹⁷ then arrived at Sirjainu garden,
Leaving there he arrived in Ujjain. 18|562|
Crossing the Narmada they went forward,
Going to Malwa at a great distance,
Seeing Shergarh [fort], they entered,
Coming to the city of Burhanpur. 19|563|

²⁹⁴ The letter written by Guru Gobind Singh to Aurangzeb is known as the *Zafarnama*, “epistle of victory.”

²⁹⁵ A river that is on the boundary of Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh.

²⁹⁶ Gwalior.

²⁹⁷ “*nar-varam*.”

Riding on his horse, he departed from there,
Marching he arrived in Aurangabad,
Finishing his work there he departed,
Then the army reached Ahmednagar.20|564|
The Singhs arrived at night,
At that mound described to them,
Staying there, they passed the night,
At daybreak they departed for the *dharamsala*.21|565|

Savaiyya

Then the Singhs went in the direction of the Deccan, and met with the *sangat*,
Whatever petition Guru Gobind Singh has sent to the emperor,
Thinking upon this, so many delusions were destroyed,
Obeying the *hukam* of Kartar, sacrificing one's life out of love for the Khalsa.
22|566|

Dohra

With great feeling in mind, speech, and body, with love in the mind,
The Khalsa of that place served these Singhs day and night. 23|567|

Chaupai

The intoxication of illusion that is spread amongst people,
Wandering around, forgetting the command,
Spreading false teachings with great fanfare,
Not remembering Prabhu's deeds. 24|568|
Whatever opening the Singh [Daya Singh] thought of,
So that he could communicate the letter,
He departed in the direction that occurred to him,

Knowing he would stopped from any side.25|569|

The Singhs devised many strategies,

Their attempts, however, did not bear any fruit,

Sending a written account to Prabhu,

Show your favor, come to my assistance.26|570|

Soratha

Then Daya Singh wrote Prabhu a request,

Please do this work yourself [through me], please assist me Prabhu ji. 27|571|

Dohra

Calling a diamondsmith, the emissary was prepared,

He who was sent by Prabhu reached the *darbar*.28|572|

He wrote Prabhu's words in the form of five *hukams*,

In order to complete your work, you yourself will receive assistance. 29|573|

The emissary went again from there,

Now the play that will transpire there is Prabhu's work. 30|574|

Chaupai

Exercising his control, one Singh came,

Along with the Singh he created a plan.

Reflecting, he requested,

The letter was dispatched into the hand of the Shah. 31|575|

In that all of the events were recorded,

The Shah thinking upon this,

Then he said very little,

He did not understand the import of the complete story.32|576|

Savaiyya

In the letter to Shah Aurang[zeb]'s request, [it was written], 'If you desire I can come and meet you,'

'Your subordinates broke their promises and this is the account of the fight,'

'The Rajas arriving in the battlefield were wounded by my people,'

'Having reflected upon this, I have sent you my Singh [messenger] directly.' 33|577|

Bhujang Prayat Chhand

'Knowing the great responsibility you possess,'

'Your subordinates are breakers of promises,'

'I have written to you in all earnestness,'

'I trust that you will do what is right.' 34|578

'A good person only seeks another's benefit,'

'An evil person seeks only another's harm,'

'I hope that you will take my request seriously,'

'That you will take action without delay.' 35|579|

'Permit me to come in your presence with one thousand riders,'

'The army of the Singhs sounding the war drums,'

'The custodians of the forts and armed units,'

'Whose *subas* come along the way.' 36|580|

'Please prepare this command and send this,'

'Please dispatch it to these places on the way,'

'As soon as I receive the order of the Shah,'

'We will start the journey, that is my wish,' 37|581|

Savaiyya

Assessing [the situation] he replied, ‘At what auspicious time will you come, Kartar?’

‘I will have it written and handed to the [Daya] Singh and he will return herewith,’

Then a macebearer with a *farman* was ordered to deliver it to Gobind Singh, [Aurangzeb told him that] ‘He should go and with folded hands tell him [the Guru] that he can move with freedom.’ 38|582|

Dohra

The macebearer holding the *farman* went with Daya Singh,
The emperor Aurang[zeb] bid them farewell. 39|583|

Bhujang Prayat Chhand

The macebearer and Daya Singh then left that place,
Then the those five *hukams* were sent from the *darbar*,
Every soul experienced equanimity and peace,
The command was read out loud. 40|584|

Pauri

‘I have maintained my promise as per my word,’
Was written in the command sent by Satiguru,
Do not place trust in those other orders,
Hearing this great happiness was felt,
Those slanderers will repent after having squandered their lives. 41|585|
Kartar wrote this command – Do not fear,
Assist Daya Singh in this work,
Do this good work and there will be no delay,
Whoever loves Satiguru, keeps evil thoughts out of his mind,
Think upon him who will always be with you.42|586|

Pauri

Listening to this, [everyone was] filled with happiness there was no grief,
Eradicating all afflictions, extinguishing delusions,
Forgetting worries and fears in this way he commanded,
Abide without fear in the true *sangat*, no illness will touch your body,
Showing affection for the virtuous and increasing the *sangat*. 43|587.

Pauri

Whichever person models his actions on the command,
They will see the results of that labor,
Whoever speaks of Satiguru with praise,
They will not suffer or see hell,
That person who always remains in God's presence. 44|588|

Pauri

Whoever recites the name of Kartar, will never experience suffering,
Whoever assents to this in his heart, he will be made happy,
He is the highest king and we should accept his command,
Whoever recognizes this will attain the highest honor,
Whoever meditates upon Gobind Singh, has his wishes fulfilled. 45|589|

Pauri

Whoever hears the words of Kartar and keeps them in their heart,
Whatever work is performed, that desired fruit will be received,
The fools who do not remember him and suffer from pride,
Are like the crow which leaves the fragrant for the odorous,
Just as the seed, so will be the fruit. 46|590|

Pauri

One a slanderer, the other Khalsa, this is the will of the creator,

He has established this play since eternity,

Whoever he protects, lives, that is what is written,

Not knowing that he is the only Purakh, they run after others.

In death, they go to Yama's abode and then they repent. 47|591|

Pauri

Sitting within the true *sangat*, he who displays arrogance,

How could you cross over the ocean of existence?

How could you find favor in the *dargah*, think over it,

How could iron ever compare with gold?

If you meet Satiguru, the touchstone that turns everything into gold, you will be liberated in one moment. 48|592|

Pauri

The really debased one is he who destroy's his own family,

He is evil and his actions are rotten,

He slanders, steals, he does not meditate upon Hari's praise,

He talks as if he is heedful, but he is deceitful,

If Satiguru is gracious, he can turn that evil one into a *sadh*. 49|593|

Pauri

Everything is yours, where can anyone go,

If a son is bad, the father never says it,

His delusion disappears who takes shelter with you,

His transgressions will be destroyed immersed in your name,

Gobind Singh is compassionate, he will bring you into the *satsang*. 50|594|

Pauri

Whatever Kartar says, place that in your heart,
Abandon the false world, evil deeds, and greed,
To destroy delusion, meditate upon the one,
Attaching to those lotus feet with affection, all delusion is dispelled,
Wearing these five weapons, come for *darshan*. 51|595|

Thus concludes the account in *Sri Gursobha* of the Mystery of God

Chapter Fourteen

Battle of Kichak

Dohra

Many days were passed there, what I say, reflect upon it,

Daya Singh left from there and went to Sirjanhar. 1|596|

Daya Singh was delayed in the Deccan,

The Sahib said to the Singhs, be prepared. 2|597|

Soratha

We will march in the direction of the Deccan through the Malwa,

Everyone should be ready, Prabhu related this to them. 3|598|

Savaiyya

Armed with five weapons they were ready and the Singhs arrived at that place,
promptly.

Each and every brave warrior, had some opium with him,

The Kartar looked in their direction and saw many young warriors,

They arrived quickly prepared with their weapons and horses, as they had been
told. 4|599|

Savvaiya

They arrived with armor for their horses, comparable to the Turks,

With their saddles shining like gold, all were prepared for a splendid sight,

A necklace of large pearls, a radiant *kalgi*-plume studded with jewels upon his
head,

It shimmered like water, and fairies stealthily hid themselves within it. 5|600|

Dohra

Attractive, smooth, clever, his movement unparalleled,
The beautiful features and form of Kartar. 6|601|

Dohra

The attendants reported to the Kripadhar,
In a very humble voice that his horse was ready. 7|602|

Savaiyya

At that time, Prabhu took a bath and armed himself with weapons,
The weapons were bathed and then covered,
Taking them out they were polished, shined, and then sheathed,
Kartar's activities are unparalleled, how can living creatures understand this.
8|603|

Dohra

His attendant brought his clothes,
He put them in front of Satiguru, who wore them all. 9|604|

Savaiyya

A crown upon his head, bearing a golden *kalgi*-plume decorated with glittering
rubies,
Studded with diamonds, emeralds, and pearls, one glance of his radiance is
pleasing,
The light of his ornaments was so magnificent, his splendor can not be
described,

Revealing his supreme brilliance in the three worlds, good people experienced great happiness. 10|605|

Moving forward from the preparations, let me speak about the weapons assembled,

There was the sword, the *jamdhar*, the *aliband*²⁹⁸, and shield adorning him,
Their radiance shining in every direction – bow and arrow, and lance,
Reducing all enemies to ash in one moment, saying this, Gobind Singh ascended [his horse]. 11|606|

Dohra

Reciting ‘Vahiguru Ji Ki Fateh’, he mounted his horse,
Drums sounding in the three worlds, the Kartar was ready. 12|607|

Savvaiya

Hearing the frightening sounds of the drums, the surrounding town all trembled,
The sun and moon also trembled not knowing the mission undertaken by Hari ji,
In the three worlds everyone trembled, Shiv ji the master of Kailash, was also frightened,
Listening, Shesh [nag] and Mahesh shook in awe of Gobind Singh. 13|608|

Savaiyya

The netherworld and heavens proclaimed, Kartar was going in the direction of the Deccan,
For what reason was Prabhu going to the Deccan via horseback,
Siddhs and *Sadhaks* all became restless for an indication from the Guru,

²⁹⁸ “Ali’s tie” reference to an ornament, jewel, or protective amulet.

Hearing the fearsome sound of drums, Lanka trembled, as Gobind Singh alighted,
I tell you. 14|609|

Dohra

Marching with his army, coming to the land of Rajputana,
Many kings and warriors came to greet him. 15|610|

Chaupai

It occurred to the Sikhs and Singhs,
They said the following to Prabhu.
‘Prabhu, please get married,’
‘Take a step forward on the path.’ 16|611|

Ruusal Chhand

Listening to all of this, Prabhu made preparations,
Commanding the Singhs, all [of the required] items were brought together.
With these preparations readied, trumpets rang out with joy,
Getting married, Prabhu departed from there. 17|612|

Dohra

Then Daya Singh also came this way and met Prabhu,
The mace-bearer went to Delhi, he did not take that route. 18|613|
Whichever villages attacked the Khalsa, they were crushed and plundered,
Those whose chiefs came with tribute were spared. 19|614|
Those Rajas who met Prabhu with folded hands,
Were left in peace in their own territory and no one bothered them. 20|615|
Whose mind was filled with pride, they didn’t meet him,
Beating and plundering them, the Khalsa took everything from them. 21|616|

Marching this way on the path, they proceeded in like manner,
Prabhu was told that there was no way ahead. 22|617|

Chaupai

Abandoning that direction, they went in another direction,
Marching, many came there.
Climbing they crossed the valley,
Coming to Prabhu, one told him about this development. 23|618|
Aurang Shah has left the world,
He departed from the world.
He has left behind his kingdom and treasure,
Grabbed by time, his strength was powerless. 24|619|

Dohra

Prabhu then marched in the company of his horses,
[He said] Let us go and see the colorful battle for succession.²⁹⁹ 25|620|

Chaupai

In this way, Prabhu spent many days there,
They marched and camped at many places.
There was a dense forest of trees,
There was also a beautiful pool there. 26|621|

Dohra

Surveying the place full of shade,
He dismounted from his horse and camped there. 27|622|

²⁹⁹ “*sultani jang.*”

Prabhu had come this way to see the land of Kichak,
In this way they had arrived there, near the city of Baghaur.28|623|

Chaupai

When you came to the city of Baghaur,
The people there experienced great fear.
They made preparations for battle,
So that they would not be plundered. 29|624|
Seeing that unparalleled army,
The brave warriors, acting for the benefit of others.
Procuring provisions they came to that place,
No one could fathom that mystery. 30|625|
Grabbing their weapons and clothes,
Conducting the battle with resolve.
One person was dispatched to find out information,
'Go and ask him all of the ways and customs.' 31|626|
He arrived at Prabhu's place,
Folding his hands, he greeted him.
He asked his questions of Prabhu,
'From which place and direction have you arrived?'32|627|
'The people of the town are very fearful,'
In this way he petitioned Prabhu.
[Because] His [Prabhu's] camp was situated near the town,
[He asked], 'Have you come with the intent of looting?'33|628|
Prabhu dispatched Dharam Singh there,
There he brought many Singhs.
The warriors of the Guru went to his house,
He related the entire story in the following manner. 34|629|

‘The battle of Kichak brought them to that place,’
 ‘To see that, Prabhu has come himself.’
 ‘Don’t let any doubt come into your mind,’
 ‘Know my speech to be true.’ 35|630|
 Then there was peace in his mind,
 His heart was pleased by his words.
 Then Dharam Singh came to Prabhu,
 And he instructed him about other places [of interest]. 36|631|
 There is [fire]wood, grass and water in abundance,
 A unique garden has been made.
 Alighting near there, he rested,
 Guru Gobind Singh at that place. 37|632|
 People came to meet him there,
 Prabhu ordered gifts for them.
 Those who accompanied them,
 Narrated how the battle of Kichak was fought by Bhim.³⁰⁰ 38|633|
 Taking gunners with him, Prabhu,
 The other Singhs were left behind.
 Whoever’s name Prabhu commanded,
 Only those Singhs came along. 39|634|
 They moved up a distance of one *kosa*,
 Seeing that place, Prabhu said.
 To the Singhs who were with him,
 Prabhu assigned duties at different places. 40|635|
 The Singhs thus divided their duties,

³⁰⁰ One of the Pandava brothers. In the *Mahabharata*, during their year of exile, the Pandava brothers arrive at King Virata’s court. In one episode, Kichak, the brother in law of King Virata, makes untoward advances towards Draupadi and he is mercilessly killed by Bhim, one of Draupadi’s husbands.

He [the Guru] was responsible for the area of the camp.
Many days were spent there,
Their camels ate the trees in that garden.41|636|
The gardener ran away and went to the king,
'All of the trees in the garden have been eaten.'
'The camels made these trees into their food,'
'Destroying everything, they ate them.' 42|637|
Hearing these words with an angered mind,
Full of anger and excessive pride.
Then Prabhu did not remain there,
He kept this matter firmly in his mind. 43|638|
One Singh was sent for some work,
He came to their place.
They created some trouble for him,
Then war broke out between them. 44|639|
A Singh, full of anger, unsheathed his sword,
With that strength many enemies were killed.
All of the Singhs witnessed the fighting,
Grabbing their weapons they rushed forward to fight. 45|640|

Dohra

Sitting atop the hill, the Singhs watched the battle,
Lighting the cannon fuse, people there were scared. 46|641|
With furious minds, the warriors moved forward with zeal,
The warriors trampled the battlefield without delay. 47|642|

Savaiyya

Angered, the warriors scaled the tower and fought a fiercely in battle,

Unleashing arrows, assembling the heavy guns, many came forward and thought,
Just as the clouds thunder, so too everything shook when the cannon roared,
The field was filled with dead bodies and *yogini* and *dakini* feasted with delight.
48|643|

Chaupai

Looking in each other's direction,
Holding weapons, they killed many.
Just as a snake stings the body,
In the same way, weapons pricked their bodies.49|644|
Nothing was left of their bodies,
As they were attacked.
The blows on the bodies of those warriors were such,
That the body forgot all awareness of life. 50|645|
Like so many clothes spread upon the earth,
Dyed in different colors.
In the same way, so many warriors fell there,
They fought for two days and two nights. 51|646|

Dohra

When the third day dawned, Prabu said,
Dharam Singh, go and lead this onslaught. 52|647|
Dharam Singh came, took some Singhs, and charged forward,
Breaking through the door, with murderous shouts. 53|648|

Savaiyya

Brandishing weapons the deafening sound of the attacking Singhs sent many
warriors to the next world,

Coming to that wall, climbing the fort, many were killed in hand to hand battle,
Killing with unsurpassed weaponry, soldier upon soldier fell down,
Leaving that entrance, the Singhs established themselves at another entrance.
54|649|

Dohra

Coming to the entrance, the Singhs were extremely angered,
Consulting with one another, they set the door on fire. 55|650|

Soratha

When the strength of that fiery blaze broke the door,
The all of the Singhs rushed inside. 56|651|

Savaiyya

Breaking the doors, when the Singhs moved ahead warriors came to fight them,
Holding their swords they fell upon each other like overflowing rivers,
The warriors and Singhs attacked each other just as a blacksmith strikes iron,
Fighting in hand to hand battle with full faith in Kartar, those Singhs attacked.
57|652|

Chaupai

Meeting on the battlefield, the warriors did the following,
They were determined to sacrifice their lives.
Their minds knew no greed,
The strong brave warriors fought. 58|653|
Grabbing a hold of their arms,
Decapitating their heads, destroying their bodies.
As the washerman beats clothes upon the stone,

In that way, these warriors slaughtered each other. 59|654|
Innumerable corpse fell upon corpse,
Falling like the endless petals of a flower.
Those warriors drank from the cup of love,
Who upon drinking, swooned, full of intoxication. 60|655|

Dohra

Many soldiers were killed there, and many ran away,
The Singhs went to the second door, with one fell swoop. 61|656|
Attacking there, chasing all of the enemies away,
At the third door, the brave Singhs angrily destroyed those warriors. 62|657|

Chaupai

The arrogance of the powerful yet remained,
They still did not accept his authority.
One Singh came to Prabhu,
Arriving there he narrated the report [of events]. 63|658|

Dohra

One Singh told Prabhu about the great hill,
'If we can take the canon there, then these fools will surrender.' 64|659|
Then Prabhu had the *jabar jang*³⁰¹ sent to the hilltop,
Once hit by this, the enemy went on the run. 65|660|

Chaupai

The Singhs that rushed from the back gate,

³⁰¹ Name of a cannon.

They secured whatever they could grab.
Arriving there, said this to Prabhu,
'Come and see the fort,' Purakh Vidhata arrived.66|661|
Hearing these words, Prabhu was greatly pleased,
At that time, this occurred to him.
He had no other concern,
Mounted on a horse, marching forward. 67|662|
Marching, the Sahib arrived at the fort,
All of the Singhs rushed forward.
Hearing news of the marching forces,
The Rajputs arrived. 68|663|

Dohra

The Singhs were in the back when the huge army arrived,
Running in battle many warriors were wounded. 69|664|
In order to battle, many warriors arrived there,
They had reached where Prabhu was standing firm. 70|665|
The great warriors confronted each other,
Holding his bow, the virtuous Satiguru Sujan Purakh. 71|666|
At that time Dharam Singh arrived,
One Raja has been killed, now attack the second. 72|667|

Savaiyya

That Singh grabbed [his weapon] and quickly ran towards that king,
Despite trying the Raja could not attack once the sword bearing Singh attacked.
Injured, blood flowing from the body, he lost consciousness and fell to the
ground,

Cutting his head, he quickly brought it and the second king was filled with anger.

73|668|

Savaiyya

Holding his weapon he began attacking in that direction,

Cautiously, at that time you unleashed your powerful arrows.

Giving up their lives fighting, those kings departed for heaven,

Routing the army of Baghaur, the drums sounded the praise of Gobind Singh.

74|669|

Dohra

The army left Baghaur with their chiefs having been killed,

Kartar then moved to Jahanabad [Delhi]. 75|670|

They marched to Shahjahanabad,

Now I will relate the story of the death of the Shah [Aurangzeb]. 76|671|

Thus concludes the account in *Sri Gursobha* of the Battle of Kichak.

Chapter Fifteen

Account of the Emperor

Dohra

In the direction of the Deccan, Ahmed Nagar is a unique place,
For the purpose of duty, Sultan Naurang Shah³⁰² remained there. 1|672|

Chaupai

Ahmed Nagar is a marvelous place,
Naurang Shah had established himself there.
He stayed at that place for thirteen months,
Dying there, he was interned. 2|673|
The news of this death spread like wildfire in all of the cities,
A great many heavy discussions ensued.
Many places were looted,
Everyone knew who would take the throne. 3|674|
Hearing the news, Azam³⁰³ came,
His army came in order to secure everything.
Above his head, a swinging canopy,
Again, he went in the direction of the Deccan. 4|675|

Dohra

Then Azam sat on his throne, his mind filled with joy,
Having prepared for battle, he left without delay. 5|676|

³⁰² The Mughal emperor, Aurangzeb (r. 1658-1707).

³⁰³ Also known as Muhammad, he was the third son of Aurangzeb.

Chaupai

When Naurang Shah departed [for the other world],
Azam thought the throne to be his.
The canopy swung over his head,
Drums resounded in all of Hind.³⁰⁴ 6|677|
When the Shah heard this news,
He marched, brooking no delay.
When he reached the environs of Delhi,
He sent a written request to Prabhu. 7|678|

Dohra

Pleading he requested him to come without delay,
You, Prabhu could be of assistance in this battle for succession. 8|679|

Chaupai

Prabhu listened to that request,
He dispatched some words of encouragement,
'Do not let any doubt enter your mind,'
'Without doubt, know the empire to be yours.' 9|680|
Then, peace filled the Shah's mind,
Established firmly in Prabhu's confidence.
Arriving at Jajau, the battle commenced,
Azam could not proceed on the path.10|681|
Moving along at great speed,
With strength they filled the battlefield.

³⁰⁴ Hindustan, India.

Summarizing this epic story,
This was like death to Azam. 11|682|

Savvaiya

Along with his army, with eyes full of shame, Azam planned,
In the battle, the brave warriors fought one another with great valor,
The chiefs engaged mightily in this fight when the Sultan [Aurangzeb] collapsed,
In order to secure the throne there were many battles in Bharat³⁰⁵, many sacrificed
their lives to steel. 12|683|

Dohra

Everyone agreed that there was no Sultan like than Azam Shah,
Then he did something strange in the battlefield. 13|684|
He entered the battle with his sons, know this to be the case,
That had not been heard of in the entire world. 14|685|

Savvaiya

Hearing that the Shah enjoyed the news, gave thanks at the divine *dargah*,
'It is through your grace that I have been blessed with victory,'
'The reputations of great warriors were with [Azam],'
'You took his life and gave the crown to me, your divine play is great O Khuda.'
15|686|

Dohra

Giving thanks at the *dargah* at the time of victory,
At that time the canopy was placed above Bahadur Shah's head.³⁰⁶ 16|687|

³⁰⁵ India.

Chaupai

The canopy swung over Bahadur Shah,
He toured through the land.

Halting at Agra,
For the four months of the rainy season. 17|688|

Dohra

With the Emperor remaining close to Agra, he thought upon it,
The Kartar arrived in Shahjahanabad. 18|689|

Thus concludes the account in *Sri Gursobha* of the Account of the Emperor.

³⁰⁶ Also known as Muazzam, he was the second son of Aurangzeb. He ascended to the throne after a bloody struggle for succession with his brothers.

Chapter Sixteen

Meeting with the Emperor

Chaupai

When Prabhu approached Delhi,
Hearing the news, the *sangat* experienced happiness.
Tremendous joy arose in every individual,
The entire Khalsa came to receive him. 1|690|
Many carts and conveyance were requested,
A good number also went by horseback.
Soldiers also arrived in great number,
Appearing as if drunk. 2|691|

Madhubhar Chhand

Thinking upon this,
The numerous Sikhs,
Recited *shabads*,
Seeing the one. 3|692|
All fear of this world was removed,
Destroying all delusion,
Full of happiness,
Seeing an infinite sight. 4|693|
Leaving behind anxiety,
The soul firmly established,
A mind full of happiness,
Breaking all fetters. 5|694|

Dohra

With great affection in mind, speech, and action everyone was immersed in
Satiguru,
Satiguru arrived, and upon seeing him the Sikhs experienced great
happiness.6|695|

Adil

When Prabhu came to Shahjahanabad,
He performed many wondrous deeds and enjoyed himself immensely,
Across the bank of the Yamuna where his camp was established,
His *darshan* uplifted the world. 7|696|

Chaupai

Many days were spent at that place,
Then Prabhu commanded the army to march.
Moving from that place,
Mathura pleased Prabhu greatly. 8|697|
Seeing that place, Prabhu was happy,
He came to Surajkund.
Then seeing a resting place,
Many Brahmins were given offerings. 9|698|
When Prabhu came to Mathura,
Then, he went again to Brindavan.
He saw Kunjali and all the different places,
Then he saw a place with great shade. 10|699|

Dohra

Arriving there and sitting, you requested some sweets,

Setting those in the field, so that monkeys could eat them. 11|700|
Fighting amongst themselves there was great noise and anger,
Seeing this spectacle, Prabhu enjoyed himself. 12|701|
He had this and other delights in Brindavan,
Leaving that place, he moved toward Agra. 13|702|

Chaupai

Moving, they left that place,
Many days passed on the road.
When they were four *kosa* from Agra,
Prabhu told them to make a halting place. 14|703|

Dohra

Sighting a garden, they alighted there to rest,
Two *kosa* away was the Emperor's camp. 15|704|
Hearing this, Muin Khan³⁰⁷ sent a delegation,
Requesting the Guru to grant him *darshan*. 16|705|

Chaupai

Prabhu prepared the army,
The brave warriors with warm hearts.
He took them along with him,
And arrived in the emperor's camp. 17|706|
The camp was in a garden, a marvelous place,
There were many Khans camped there.
The Kripadhar came to that place,

³⁰⁷ A minister in Bahadur Shah's service. He was given the title "Khanan-Khan."

Arriving he granted *darshan*. 18|707|

Dohra

Seeing him [the emperor said], ‘You have done me a great favor,’
‘Considering me as yours, you have come to meet me.’ 19|708|

Chaupai

Touching his lotus feet,
Giving him a blessing, Prabhu showed his pleasure.
Then he explained his circumstances to him,
Prabhu said he would be protected. 20|709|
He displayed great respect for Prabhu,
Then he bid him farewell.
With folded hands he related many things,
Then Prabhu returned to his place. 21|710|

Dohra

Departing from there, he arrived at another place,
Finding a place there he passed the night. 22|711|
With the the heavy rain it was not possible to proceed,
Arriving there, Prabhu rested. 23|712|
When the night had passed and day came, he mounted his horse,
Seeing a garden he considered it as a site for decamping. 24|713|
At that time he established a place in that garden,
He allocated places to others and rested. 25|714|
[When] many days had passed, the Shah remembered him,
‘Let us call Prabhu to come and meet me.’ 26|715|
Sending this to Prabhu, ‘O Kartar, be gracious,’

‘Please grant me your *darshan*, O Kripadhar.’ 27|716|

Chaupai

Prabhu summoned the brave Singhs,
Then he commanded them to prepare.
Mounting his horse, Prabhu departed,
Arriving at the Emperor’s camp. 28|717|

Dohra

Arriving at the Shah’s place, he made his brave warriors stand,
He went inside accompanied by a single Singh. 29|718|
Arriving at the royal entry point, the Singh was stopped there,
In his true form, only Prabhu was allowed to enter. 30|719|

Chaupai

Donning a bow and all of his weapons,
His *kalgi*-plume shining.
Entering with a regal gait,
Sitting next to the Shah. 31|720|
The Shah looked in his direction,
Having his *darshan* he became enraptured.
His entire being was exhilarated,
Like a bumblebee intoxicated by a flower. 32|721|
‘Exalted is Prabhu, unfathomable,’
‘You have made my rule firm.’
‘You have shown compassion by coming here,’
‘This throne and favor is due to your blessing.’ 33|722|
Offering a *kalgi*-plume and ornament,

A *khillat* of the Shah's choice.
 Was given to Prabhu by the Shah,
 'Please enjoy this, my humble gift.' 34|723|
 At that time, Prabhu said,
 'Please call the Singh inside.'
 He had the Singh carry those gifts,
 Taking leave, Prabhu arrived at the camp. 35|724|
 Prabhu's activities bring great joy,
 Prabhu's praise is unparalleled.
 Let me relate a tale of one day,
 As if a dark cloud had risen in the sky. 36|725|
 As if clouds were gathering from the four directions, dark elephants were brought
 in,
 How they fought with each other cannot be related properly.
 The elephants attacked each other, lifting and throwing each other to the ground,
 The King of Kings Prabhu watched them through a viewing window. 37|726|
 Untied from their place, breaking their shackles the elephants came face to face,
 Fighting with their trunks, with feet hitting forcefully causing great havoc.
 The Karta was so happy to see this he gave money to their owners,
 The King of Kings Prabhu watched them through a viewing window 38|727|
 Coming in front of one another, the two elephants clashed,
 Colliding with one another, in that way they fought.
 One ran forward, the other chased him screaming,
 The King of Kings Prabhu watched them through a viewing window 39|728|

Dohra

Engaged in marvelous activities during those days ,
 How can I even describe [his] wondrous deeds? 40|729|

Chaupai

For many months, they moved in other directions,
With ease, those days passed.
The *sangat* came from places far and wide,
To have *darshan* of Agam Purakh. 41|730|

Chaupai

A request came from the Shah,
The Shah wished to go in a different direction.
He turned his entourage toward Rajputana,
Bahadur Shah departed in that direction. 42|731|

Dohra

Leaving the garden, Prabhu departed,
Arriving at Itamadpur, he came upon a reservoir. 43|732|

Chaupai

He spent several days there,
Sahib Zoraver Singh³⁰⁸ arrived.
Great joy was experienced,
Puran Kartara was gracious. 44|733|
Different types of auspicious songs were sung,
Many types of musical instruments played.
Many made entreaties,
Their faith was strengthened. 45|734|

³⁰⁸ Not to be confused with the *sahibzada* Zoraver Singh, he was a warrior in the Guru's army for whom the Guru had great affection.

Such were the gifts given by Prabhu,
Imperceptible, Niranjana Purakh, Bidhata.
In many ways, Prabhu enjoyed these things,
Great happiness was felt by every individual. 46|735|
Singing songs of praise night and day,
All of the Sikhs experienced happiness.
Many days were spent in this way,
Marching, they came to the Shah.

Thus concludes the account in *Sri Gursobha* of the Meeting with the Emperor.

Chapter Seventeen

The Battle of the Sahibzadas and Account of Travel

Bhujang Prayat Chhand

Proceeding and marching in such a way,
I recite just as you commanded,
Going from place to place,
Then you arrived close to the Shah's army. 1|737|
Accompanying the Shah,
Many days of travel, know this,
Surrounding Ajmer, it was subjugated,
Approaching Jodhpur the drums were sounded. 2|738|
Then the Rajput chiefs decided,
And attacked the Shah with a large army,
Some fought, others ran away, and others died,
The Chiefs took the advice of their ministers.3|739|
These ministers were all of one mind,
Do that work which we know well,
They all met the Shah,
Finally, the drums of the Shah rang out in victory. 4|740|
The Sahib and the Shah camped at Ajmer,
When they arrived Udaipur, the Rana was terrified,
Preparing his son he sent him there,
Meeting the Shah he was welcomed warmly. 5|741|
At that time the Shah had an idea,
And he began to think about the Deccan,
Traveling and marching with his army,

Taking all available soldiers and other officials with him. 6|742|
The Sahib accompanied the Shah also,
He had his own games, the master of masters,
When he was arriving close to Chittor,
Zoraver Singh went to see the city. 7|743|
He climbed to Chittor,
He had two or three servants with him,
He sent them to buy the grass,³⁰⁹
By some way, they sounded the drum. 8|744|
Hearing the sound of those drums, some thieves ran away,
They met those buying the grass and a situation developed,
With great anger rising they were diverted into something else,
Fighting, two were finally killed. 9|745|
Moving forward with great anger,
Coming to that spot, they related the story [to Zoraver],
The crowd chased them and ordered them to abandon their weapons,
Watching them the people told them this. 10|746|
Taking weapons in their hands, they instead fired arrows,
Many enemies were killed there,
Whoever was saved, ran from there upon hearing your voice,
No matter how many numberless enemies came they could not attack. 11|747|
In no time, many more enemies arrived,
Arriving from the four directions, armed with weapons,
Zoraver grabbed the lance that was standing on the ground,
Taking it in your hand, fighting fiercely. 12|748|

³⁰⁹ This is a reference to the green fodder (the fresh fodder) that their horses would have needed. Unlike corn fodder (dry fodder), it is not possible to travel with green fodder hence the need to procure it.

Screaming, corpse fell upon corpse,
Just as flowers fall from a branch,
They fell as if tied in a garland,
Finally, the inhabitants ran away from there. 13|749|
With great energy, more arrived running from the four directions,
With their arrival, the situation changed,
There, their weapons clashed with each other,
I cannot express the heavy battling. 14|750|
Fighting in that way, blood flowed,
Bodies wettened with blood,
As if spending the night maddened by love,
Intoxicated, their bodies swaying. 15|751|
Then, swooning, lifting their weapons,
Killing so many enemies,
These warriors gave their lives in sacrifice,
Their final rites performed they then died. 16|752|
Unaware of their play and death,
Fighting in this way, full of virtue,
Fighting a second Singh also died,
The other running from there and coming to Sahib. 17|753|
Hearing this, the master deputed the army there,
Soon they arrived at the marked spot,
Seeing that, uttering these words,
'He is a mighty warrior and fought mightily.' 18|754|
'There coming face to face with death,'
'It was not time for him to die,'
The Kartar played this game, which we cannot know,
Where all did he show himself. 19|755|

Going there, with great force marching,
The Shah ji could not perceive anything ahead,
Going to a resting place on the Narmada,
Spending days there before departing. 20|756|
Crossing the Narmada and marching,
Some Singhs stayed behind and fought procuring the grass,
Fighting there, many were killed,
Leaving the grass they ran back. 21|757|
Then the Singhs brought the grass to the *darbar*,
With a big force the Turks departed,
Then revealing the secret, the Singhs said as follows,
Inflicting injures great fighting ensued. 22|758|
Gathering in great anger those forces arrived there,
Would you have fierce battle, they said,
The virtuous master stood firm observing,
This is not a good place for battle. 23|759|
Finally they arrived at the place,
The Master and the Singhs unleashed arrows,
Killing two or three horseback,
Fatigued, the army remained there. 24|760|
Then the Sahib said the following words,
'Mann Singh died for a good cause,'
He gave them advice and sent them away,
Moving from there, the Singhs arrived at some other place. 25|761|
They did not heed that which was said,
You will do a great fight,
With great anger they had fought,
Those Singhs did not start the fight there. 26|762|

How could they fight without receiving a command,
Knowing this they put their lives on the line,
Falling upon them, attacking in such a way,
They sacrificed themselves in front of Prabhu Purakh. 27|763|
They fired bullets at those fierce enemies,
A few Singhs fell in battle,
There many were killed,
They were dispatched from there.28|764|

Dohra

This happened and many days were spent there,
Going to Burhanpur, they established a place. 29|765|

Thus concludes the account in Sri Gursobha of the Battle of the Sahibzadas and
Account of the King.

Chapter Eighteen

Light Merging with Light

Bhujang Prayat Chhand

Many days had passed and the Shah planned the move on,
Prabhu spent many days there,
The Shah wrote a *farman* not to delay,
Please come and see me. 1|766|
The royal note arrived [at th Guru's place],
Holding it, he touched it to his heart and throat,
He read it aloud,
'Marching at once do not delay.' 2|767|
Without the army, he departed for that place,
Crossing the Tapti river he arrived,
Many Singhs came together there in a great gathering,
They created several resting places there. 3|768|
Many Singhs kept watch, many more in accompaniment,
Many were sent to the *des* [Punjab],
Spending many days there, then they departed,
Meeting the Shah with drums resounding 4|769|
Fully ornamented the Prabhu met the Shah,
With great satisfaction, the Shah bid him farewell,
Departing, he returned to his place,
They travelled together and then he departed. 5|770|
Moving with a great entourage, they moved for many days,

Finally, they arrived at Banganga,³¹⁰
 Hearing of a place named Nanderh,
 They established the Guru's place there. 6|771|
 The Shah also set up a place there,
 The *misls* remained there, people set up homes,
 Having come there, many days were passed,
 Now at last I will relate the end of this story. 7|772|
 Hearing about this, a Pathan arrived,
 In order to harm him, he came close to Prabhu,
 Passing time by uttering sweet deceptive words,
 Unable to attack him as many people were around. 8|773|
 Taking leave, he left suddenly,
 After a few days passed, he returned,
 For a few hours he sat there,
 Unable to attack [Guru Gobind Singh], he left. 9|774|
 In this way, he came for several days,
 He was not able to wound him, the opportunity had not arisen,
 Coming in this way many times, he ascertained key details,
 He realized, the evening is the best time for me. 10|775|
 Finally, one evening, this evil enemy arrived,
 At long last, the Sahib called him near,
 He went and sat close and was given *parsad*,
 Taking the sweets, he ate them. 11|776|
 At that time, there were no Singhs nearby,
 Every one of them had fallen asleep,
 As a result, Prabhu was also taking rest,

³¹⁰ Also known as Penganga, it is a river north of Nanderh. It is close to the Godavari river.

Holding a *jamdhar*, he attacked him. 12|777|
 Having struck one blow, he wanted to strike again,
 Before his second, [the Guru] struck him,
 He inflicted one strike, and not the second,
 That evil one was killed and could not leave. 13|778|
 The [Sahib] called out, 'is there anyone?'
 From all four directions, people came to see what had happened,
 Running there together, many Singhs arrived,
 They were both killed, they could not leave.³¹¹ 14|779|
 A great disturbance arose,
 As if hearing a coming apocalypse,
 Even the most courageous, were shaken,
 Removing their swords, they could not help but attack him. 15|780|
 The Guru said, 'Do not do that,'
 'He has been dead for a long time, take him away'
 Then they thought, that Prabhu's clothes should be removed,
 They wondered how Prabhu's dress had gotten its color. 16|781|
 But no one had noticed, the wounds of Prabhu,
 The young soldiers did not allow anyone to go forward,
 Then the Singhs arrived, bringing their hands to their chest,
 Then the deep wound became visible. 17|782|
 The Singhs were deeply grieved, beating their hands,
 'O Karanhar, what type of game have you played,'
 Then, Sahib made the following statement.
 'Sri Akal Ji has protected me.' 18|783|
 Hearing this statement, some were consoled,

³¹¹ The second person would have been his accomplice.

Then they called their other companions,
Then they stitched the wound with silk thread,
When Prabhu stood up, the wound was reopened. 19|784|
Re-stitching the silk thread, the night was passed,
At dawn, they applied salve,
Several days passed in this way,
Having *darshan* and meeting one another, many Singhs arrived. 20|785|
Standing near the door they performed *ardas*,
Whatever reached Prabhu's ears, he accepted,
He gave a magnificent *darshan* in the assembly,
Full of compassion, he saw everyone. 21|786|

Dohra

Giving such a merciful *darshan*, he bid farewell,
Your praise is unexcelled, your new story refreshing. 22|787|

Madhubhar Chhand

Meditating, your praise is endless,
New, wise master. 23|788|
Removing fear, destroying illusion,
Incomparable, a vision. 24|789|
Indescribable, beyond reckoning,
Without end, can not be fathomed by spells. 25|790|
The virtuous ones meditating upon him, aware of his mantra,
He is everpresent, without fear. 26|791|
Numerous Sikhs, meditate upon this,
Reciting *shabads*, with one focus. 27|792|
Removing fear, destroying illusion,

With great happiness, an endless vision. 28|793|
Destroying anxiety, firmly established,
The heart full of joy, destroying all fetters. 29|794|
Liberated, fulfilling all desire,
Settled at your feet, in great play. 30|795|

Dohra

Those with great affection in mind, speech, and action immersed in Satiguru,
Then they felt great peace, those who came for *darshan*. 31|796|

Bhujang Prayat Chhand

Granting *darshan* he said,
Seeing everyone, he took his leave.
After many days, the end time arrived,
He instructed them to quickly prepare *parsad*. 32|797|
Eating some food, drinking some water,
Giving everyone all manner of reassurance,
In the middle of the night, in the fourth watch,
The embodiment of *shabad*, he said. 33|798|

Dohra

Summoning them at midnight, the incomparable Singhs awoke,
He spoke Vahiguru Ji Ki Fateh for the last time. 34|799|
Listening to this message, they were overwhelmed with restless hearts,
Keeping this in their hearts, no one uttered a word. 35|800|

Savaiyya

In their hearts, everyone was in dismay, ‘What has happened?’ they thought,

Meeting there at that time, all of the Singhs thought on this matter,
‘Let us cremate him before the rise of the sun,’
‘We do this deed to have light merge into light,’ 36|801|

Dohra

In Sammat 1765 [1708 CE],
On Katak *sudi* 5 during the night, this took place. 37|802|

Savaiyya

How can I relate this, there is no way to explain these turn of events,
I wanted to say something else, but here something else transpired,
That man is without end, the unfathomable Hari about whom people recite,
Everyone wished for one outcome, but what happened was altogether different.
38|803|

Dohra

The entire world came to know the events that transpired in the Deccan,
It is not possible to describe the game that Kartar played. 39|804|

Chaupai

One day everyone came in front of him,
Gathered together, the Singhs asked questions.
‘Prabhu, what form are you going to take?’
He gave answers to this in the following way. 40|805|
At that time, the Guru said these words,
‘The Khalsa is my form,’ he said.
‘My affection is with the Khalsa,’
‘I have bestowed my mantle of authority upon the Khalsa.’ 41|806|

Dohra

‘The Khalsa is my form, I am with the Khalsa,’

‘From beginning to end, my light will be in the Khalsa.’ 42|807|

Latan Chhand

He is the Khalsa whose heart is free of delusion,

He who remains free of delusion, will be the Khalsa of Satiguru.

Our Satiguru is transcendent, reflect upon the unchanging *shabad*,

Whoever meditates in his heart on the *shabad*, will achieve liberation.

Its measure is infinite, it is impossible to describe the extent of its form,

Its light appears in every place, detached from all else, I seek its protection.

43|808|

Dohra

Your shelter maintains everything, know that there is no other,

Whoever remembers you in mind, speech and action, think with love they are
yours. 44|809|

Savaiyya

What for are the strength of mother, father, son, and brother?

What is a dear friend, like the lady of the house?

What is the treasure in a home, for which one has great affection?

O source of compassion, have mercy on me Prabhu Gobind Ji, I only have your
support. 45|810|

One should meditate on your name daily without delay,

Do not let the opportunity of this human body perish away,

Leave aside the poison of this world and do good deeds,

Always sing the praise of that one, gather in the company of the true *sangat*, and take *amrit*. 46|811|

Dohra

Drink *amrit* and serve the good ones,
This human life is priceless, and it will be successful if you remember Gurudev.
47|812|

Savaiyya

Do not forget, sing the praises of Kartar, reflect on the *shabad*,
Who said that, who did this? O my foolish mind do not wander,
Time will render you helpless, O you must not look here and there,
Praise the *sants*, and recite the name Gobind, Gobind. 48|813|
Immersed in falsehood, you will repent like a man struck by poverty,
Lost in delusion you wander and the spirit will depart leaving the body behind,
Praise the *sants*, and recite the name Gobind, Gobind. 49|814|
You strive for honor in society, but none of these efforts will yield anything,
Deeds performed in this world will not matter, and the real deed remains undone,
What you are immersed in will not go with you, why are you lost in such things?
Praise the *sants*, and recite the name Gobind, Gobind. 50|815|
Why devote yourself to the world? Remember what is eternal, therein lies your liberation,
Why do you wallow in this path of greed, even without water you will drown there,
Thinking of the well alone will not lead you anywhere,
Praise the *sants*, and recite the name Gobind, Gobind. 51|816|
Whether through the means of yoga, the indulgence of desire, or another path, these are futile,

Performing austerities or burying yourself will not avert death,
 Vows of silence, nudity, pointing your eyes skyward – these will not work either,
 Praise the *sants*, and recite the name Gobind, Gobind. 52|817|
 None of these methods will bear fruit, O Friend, follow only the love of the divine
 name,
 Leave delusion and false paths behind, follow the one and reflect upon this
 essential truth,
 Taking shelter with him, all of your difficulties will disappear, seek his shelter
 alone,
 Praise the *sants*, and recite the name Gobind, Gobind. 53|818|
 Neither do you recognize true deeds, nor do you know what to refrain from,
 Know your self, live your life remaining unsullied by the world,
 Not knowing what to do, you are gorged in delusion,
 Praise the *sants*, and recite the name Gobind, Gobind. 54|819|
 Leave the fetters of worldly affairs behind, remain aloof from them,
 Renounce evil deeds, follow the name, and cross the shore of this world,
 Meditate upon the one Prabhu, leave images behind and realize your self,
 55|820|
 You can devise endless strategies, but the only thing that matters is the one who
 will liberate you,
 Undertaking numerous pilgrimages, going to die in Benaras, or visiting
 Kedar[nath] will not erase your sins,
 Engaging in ascetic practices will lead you somewhere, but will not take you to
 the destination,
 Praise the *sants*, and recite the name Gobind, Gobind. 56|821|
 Once you are immersed then there is no such thing as auspicious or inauspicious,
 Your sense of self will fall away, you will find your self and you will understand
 everything,

Merging light with light, only the one will emerge with no other,
Praise the *sants*, and recite the name Gobind, Gobind. 57|822|
All bliss follows from reciting Gobind's name, recite it daily with affection,
The mantra of Gurudev is the essence of all,
All snares are destroyed in a moment, receiving *gyan gita* at Gurudev's refuge,
Cries of victory resounded through the three worlds and fourteen realms when
Satiguru elevated the Khalsa. 58|823|
Full of wisdom, the words of Gurudev provided the way to liberation,
The play enacted by Kartar in this visible form, the whole world will meditate on
this,
Meditating upon that there will be victory and all enemies will be reduced to ash,
Cries of victory resounded through the three worlds and fourteen realms, the
radiant magnificence of the *Kesdhari* Guru.59|824|

Thus concludes the account in *Sri Gursobha* of Light Merging With Light.

Chapter Nineteen
Praise of the Guru's Arrival

Dohra

Now narrating the life of Prabhu, this reflection passed through my mind,
The one who created such a creation, reveals his play in the following way.1|825|

Savaiyya

To uplift the good people, we will make this divine light shine in the world,
We will look resplendent, mounted on Turkish horses that fly with wings,
Numerous *sevaks* and Singhs gathering, we will make the horses dance in ecstasy,
It is our good destiny, we promise this to you, we will sing your praises with full
faith.2|8827|26|

Dohra

With the appearance of boundless light, a unique vision unparalleled,
Listen, O my friendly mind, take protection with the Guru. 3|827|

Chappe Chhand

Immeasurable burst of light, bearer of immeasurable strength,
Boundless brave warriors, army and regiments,
You King of Kings³¹², brandishing a sword, unique beyond measure,
You rendering the armies of enemies to dust just as the grain is harvested,
Like a pot full with water, like that you are full of vitality,

³¹² “*Shahenshah*.”

Then the world resounds with cries of your praise, you the sword carrying master
of the world. 4|828|

Savaiyya

All of the masters, kings, and emperors of the world, seeing your splendour they
will be frightened,

Very frightened, the warriors and kings will abandon the country, all of them will
flee,

They try to devise other ways of saving themselves, but to no avail,

It is our good destiny, we promise this to you, we will re-establish

Anandgarh.5|829|

Destroying numerous enemies, we will disperse them helter-skelter,

Leaving their countries, where will those kings hide themselves?

You made the divine light shine in the world, people in the three worlds will sing
your praises,

It is our good destiny, we promise this to you, we will re-establish

Anandgarh.6|830|

Doing the work of the virtuous, Hari protected their honor, and we will work to
that end,

Wielding the sword, there will be no mercy, we will destroy all of the evil of our
enemies,

Dispersing them with arrows, everyone will be scattered,

It is our good destiny, we promise this to you, we will re-establish

Anandgarh.7|831|

Fighting many armies, we will establish our splendor,

Killing innumerable enemies, no one will be able to stop us,

With a dry piece of grass in their mouths, those kings will save themselves from
us,

It is our good destiny, we promise this to you, we will re-establish

Anandgarh.8|832|

Once we reside in Anand[garh], then the kings will only meditate on one name,

Keeping the Khalsa in our every breath, we will profess no other truth,

In an instant, all the sins of the world are destroyed, there will be no evil deeds
anywhere,

It is our good destiny, we promise this to you, we will re-establish

Anandgarh.9|833|

The eighteen types of flora and fauna will all recognize the Khalsa,

In the forest, among the grass and animals, everything will reflect one light,

The entire world will recite Japji, Jap, and Anand, and with this they will achieve
liberation,

It is our good destiny, we promise this to you, we will re-establish

Anandgarh.10|834|

The earth, Mount Kailash, the sun and moon, and all other forms will sing your
glory,

Sanaka and his brothers, Indra, the gods will achieve liberation.

Ganas, Narad, *gandharvas*, *kinnaras*, *yakshas*, will all sing the praises of Hari,

It is our good destiny, we promise this to you, we will re-establish

Anandgarh.11|835|

Siddhs, *sadhaks*, and *sants*, their hearts filled with happiness will sing your praises,

Listen, *bhut*, *pret*, *pisach*, and *pari* will recite this Jap and achieve liberation,

In every house, there will be bliss, and auspicious sounds will resound,

It is our good destiny, we promise this to you, we will re-establish

Anandgarh.12|836|

Thus concludes the account in *Sri Gursobha* of the Praise of the Guru's Arrival.

Chapter Twenty

All Praise

Dohra

Salutations to Gurudev, with love fixed in the mind,
Salutations to the newest of the new, please provide me with support. 1|837|

Bhujang Prayat Chhand

Salutations master of masters, the embodiment of wonder,
Salutations to the Kartar, of endless majesty,
Salutations to one who is with all forms, Salutations to the master of all,
Salutations to the everpresent one, salutations to the omnipresent one. 2|838|
Salutations giver of knowledge, light of refinement,
Salutations to the support of meditation, eternally present,
Salutations to the giver of wisdom that leads to union and liberation,
Salutations doer of deeds, Salutations O creator. 3|839|
Wondrous display, your play is astonishing,
You are the doer of deeds in this world,
You, bestower of *riddhis* and *siddhis*, and the nine treasures,
You, granter of intelligence, remover of difficulties. 4|840|
Your great light resplendent in everything,
Whatever Prabhu does, those deeds please you,
Whatever moves, emerges from you,
Innumerable creatures have been fashioned by you. 5|841|

Dohra

There praise of Prabhu is endless and unparalleled,

Remaining immanent in all creation, meditating upon this. 6|842|

Savaiyya

One light illuminates the entire world, that light is in every heart,
From Brahma to Vishnu to Shiv Shankar all the qualities of the divine are merged
into him,

All of the *devis*, nine masters, *siddhs*, *sadhaks*, *sants* and great ones rely on his
assistance,

All pervading, O mind, meditate upon his name and achieve liberation. 7|843|

Dohra

That individual who abandons Prabhu and serves another,
That ignorant fool does not fathom an iota of the mystery. 8|844|

Savaiyya

Just like the fragrance pervades flowers, Hari resides in every heart,
Just as the wick is in the lamp, Jagadishwar is [the light] of the world,
Just as the sun is visible in the sky, his reflection is seen in the water,
Just as ghee is present in cow's milk, the glory of Prabhu is impressed in every
heart. 9|845|

Dohra

Like the deer ignorant of its own fragrance,
Without the Guru, the fragrance can not be found though sitting in the forest.
10|846|

Chappai Chhand

Boundless light dwells in every heart,

You are within all, Jap in every utterance,
In every form, the embodiment of discipline, discipline itself,
In all knowledge, the knowledge borne of meditation, meditation itself,
Immovable form, eternally fearless, the fearsome creator,
You are the one whom the *sants* meditate upon, master of masters, the destroyer
of all difficulties. 11|847|

Dohra

Destroying suffering, the liberator, the creator, you Murare,
Present in every limb, the compassionate Kartar. 12|848|

Chappai Chhand

The bestower of all happiness, there is no other,
Eternally everpresent, until the end,
You are the friend, with whom no one can compare,
His glorious univereal form can not be described,
The measure of his ways beyond knowing, countless servants fall at his feet,
Removing fear, destroying difficulties, O master of masters I take refuge at your
feet. 13|849|

Dohra

I have taken refuge with him, so powerful is he,
There is nothing apart from the foundation of Prabhu. 14|850|

Kabitt

The creator of the natural world, your praise is unparalleled,
There is no end to your praise.
Whoever sings your praises with firm devotion,

You love that person, you are immanent, the perfect one.
Through *seva* one is liberated, with it your light appears,
Destroying evil thoughts, pure wisdom dawns,
There is only merit, singing your praise,
That virtuous one that remembers you does not take birth again. 15|851|

Dohra

Without devotion, man falls into the cycle of transmigration,
Worshipping the one day and night, the doubts of the mind are discarded. 16|852|

Savaiyya

Remove all doubts, eternally abiding, reciting with one voice,
Listening and filling the mind with love, meditating in the heart, remain in the
shelter of the true *sangat*,
Abandon false desire, meditate upon me, remain immersed on the beautiful one,
Hold on firmly to this powerful mantra fixed in praise of Prabhu. 17|853|

Dohra

Become established in the one name, do not let others into your heart,
Let this melody of love continue, meditate upon his lotus feet. 18|854|

Savvaiya

Meditate on the support of the earth, these good thoughts are unparalleled,
There is no other than Kartar, he destroys all suffering,
His light is in the entire world, the entire creation recites his praise,
There is no end to such infinitude though many keep searching. 19|855|

Dohra

Millions seek the subject of this unparalleled praise,
He who created everything, him only Kartar knows. 20|856|

Tribhangi Chhand

Know that there is no other than Prabhu, without him what can be said,
He, Bhagvan Purakh, knows everyone's destiny, know this,
He is the Guru, the giver, the liberator, known as Prabhu amongst the virtuous
people,
Remembering the one Swami, Antaryami, one will experience happiness. 21|857|

Dohra

O Friends, happiness arises from the name and remembering it,
Abandon unrighteousness, recite Kartar and keep his love in the heart. 22|858|

Savaiyya

Do that, show affection for Prabhu, leaving aside immorality, sadness will not
come to him,
Light will arise, this is the true name, O mind,
Without that there is no happiness, O my foolish mind, think upon this every
morning,
Without meditating on the name of the one, all other work is reduced to ashes,
23|859|

Dohra

Sin arises in the world continuously,
It is renounced by those virtuous people who show affection for Satiguru. 24|860|

Savaiyya

Renounce evil actions, build this foundation, recite the one name eternally,
Remain in the true *sangat*, then hold fast to that happiness arisen in the mind,
The love for one's family diminishes, attachment turns into detachment for that
man who devotes himself to the name,
O mind, with this knowledge, there is no need to fear Yama's emissary. 25|861|

Soratha

He will not face Yama, who recites the virtues of Kartar,
That man will achieve liberation, within whose heart there is only one melody.
26|862|

Savaiyya

Filling one's mind with the love of Prabhu, that man recites the pleasing name of
Narayan,
He who meditates upon Bhagvan in his heart and recites Hari's name, will possess
all awareness,
Yama's emissaries flee upon seeing the embodiment of beauty, sing his praises,
In the world, he rescues such fallen ones, O Kartar, all praise is yours. 27|863|

Dohra

Life is full of my many misdeeds, I have committed many infractions,
But he, Gharib Nivaz, liberates him in one moment. 28|864|

Savaiyya

Showing affection to a parrot, the *ganaka*, her pride was destroyed and she was
liberated,

With complete affection liberation is found, intelligence is increased,
With the pure name, one is purified, from the name arises modesty,
This helpless one was liberated. 29|865|

Dohra

Falling in love with the parrot she began to reflect on your name day and night,
Many waste away in austerity, and in death they do not find any repose. 30|866|

Chaupai

There was a king named Inderdrona,
He was a great knower, and an exceedingly good listener.
He had performed many fire rituals,³¹³
How many types of meritorious generosity he has performed. 31|867|
Hw performed innumerable sacrifices in this world,
Feeding Baisantara.³¹⁴
Relating the intricacies of *dharam* to the world,
But he did not know the mystery of Kartar. 32|868|
Hari is the cause of all action,
No one knows his mystery.
The Kartara is an Agam Purakh,
No one can fathom his mystery. 33|869|

Kabitt

With the power of good deeds, Inderdrona went to the abode of the gods,
Dharam Rai offered him obeisance.
He was proud that he had acquired such power,

³¹³ “*Agni ahar*.”

³¹⁴ Agni.

He did not think of upon the name.
Having pride, he was removed from the threshold,
He was born as an elephant and became an animal.
Meditate on the pure name all eight *pahars* of the day,
Without the name you will only find a place in the Kajari forest.³¹⁵34|870|

Dohra

Inderdrona was a great king, but suffered from arrogance,
As a result the creator turned him into an elephant. 35|871|

Kabitt

In that forest, Inderdrona was playing around,
He was innocently playing with his friends.
Due to his nature, he would go and sit in the water,
There a crocodile came under his foot.
At that time he had love inside of him,
And was saved from the enemy.
Through the of the glory of the name,
He was taken out of the water and granted liberation.³⁶872|

Dohra

That man who remembers you lovingly with mind, speech, and body,
He knows that your name can uplift the fallen.³⁷873|

³¹⁵ Though there are many associations with the Kajari forest in this context it is either a reference to a “plantain forest” associated with sensual excess or a place synonymous with death and darkness.

Savaiyya

Reciting only your name day and night, you become their refuge,
That energy that infuses every breath emerges from your very light,
What I have said, good or bad, it is all yours,
You are the foundation of everything in my heart, you are the blessed one. 38|874|

Dohra

You are the Swami of all, there is no other,
You pervade everything, you are the perfect one.39|875|

Savaiyya

Your light fills the world, nothing exists outside of that,
In water, earth, and forest your light illuminates everything,
You are immanent in every heart, every river, and over all vegetation,
The singular Prabhu has created many, no one can match his creation. 40|876|

Dohra

Whatever the Kartar wishes to do, that alone transpires,
One should think of this day and night and sing his praises.41|877|

Savaiyya

That man who recites with determination, will benefit from the meritorious name,
This way of love cannot be adequately expressed, with this, comfort arises and
darkness disappears,
This light eternally resides at Hari's feet, take shelter there,
Reflecting upon the glory of the Guru, then everything is accomplished. 42|878|

Dohra

Without the kindness of Satiguru, none can be liberated,
Reflecting upon this always go to the place of the Guru. 43|879|

Savaiyya

The entire creation knows that without love of the Guru, nothing can be achieved,
O my mind, without love for the Guru, how can you merge with the light?
That man who remembers the Guru achieves everything, in this way always sing
his praises,
The name is the foundation of all, hearing this story leave behind the world and
sing his praises. 44|880|

Dohra

Leave aside the phenomenal world and fix your mind at his feet,
Reciting his manifold praise daily, meditating upon his ways. 45|881|

Savaiyya

Parabrahma, Agam Karta, you are the source of comfort,
The one upon whom the good people meditate,
They leave behind greed, who know these truths in their heart,
Meditating on the name, all pain disappears, there is no other way. 46|882|

Dohra

Abandoning greed and desire, experiencing great bliss,
Know him to be everpresent, removing all worry from the mind. 47|883|

Savaiyya

The most worthy hero, the great merit of the name is due to your grace,

His light illuminating the four directions, such is my powerful Hari,
You destroy enemies and keep your Sikhs near,
O Prabhu, save me and your devotees 48|884|

Dohra

Grant me this favor Prabhu that my mind will always find happiness in you,
Remembering your name day and night with great affection. 49|885|

Savaiyya

Those that glorify Prabhu's name in the world, those individuals experience great
happiness,
Though opportunities may arise, without the knowledge of the Guru there is no
satisfaction,
Though his wonderful form is present in the world, ignorant ones still crave
another,
Those fools who forget the name of Gobind, fall into the rushing waters of life's
river. 50|886|

Dohra

Those fools who forget his name, are swept away by the currents of life,
Wandering lost in delusion, they never consider him. 51|887|

Lotan Chhand

Manifesting those secrets, there is no other than Karanhar,
Blessed is our supreme Guru whose radiance is unparalleled,
His creation is infinite, it is not possible to praise Swami,
Present in all aspects of creation, the giver of happiness, Antaryami,
All ascetics and gods serve you, none of them know the secret,

All of them take refuge at the feet of Satiguru and sing his praises. 52|888|

Dohra

In the true *sangat* one realizes the secret of Karanhar,
We are able to meet Gurudev as a result of good deeds from previous lives.
53|889|

Savaiyya

O Friends, reflect upon this, destroy all delusion in this way,
The joy of virtuous ones is found in your shelter, always reciting your name,
For those who eternally recite your singular name, all illusion is abandoned,
There is no other place to fix one's affection and no one as worthy as Guru
Gobind. 54|890|

Dohra

There is no other refuge, he is the only perfect one,
He is the only Karanhar and all praise belongs to him.55|891|

Chhapai Chhand

Without your name, I know of nothing else,
Fixing you in my heart day and night, reciting your name,
Reflecting on the *shabad*, leaving all worthless pursuits behind,
This life is ephemeral, the world is nothing but a dream,
When Prabhu illuminated my mind, then suffering, pain, and delusion were
removed,
Those who have been illumined recite your name day and night. 56|892|

Dohra

The dilemmas of mind and body departed with the light of the name,
From this singular name all snares were broken.57|893|

Lotan Chhand

Without devotion man will not achieve liberation and will continually take rebirth
in the world,

Without the shelter of your name, they will suffer pain and pleasure,

There is no shelter for that man, without devotion they will not achieve anything,

Sing the praises of Hari and abandon the poison of the world, take *amrit* and
meditate upon him,

He who immerses himself in you achieves the nine treasures, fixing his mind
upon you in service,

The Guru revealed this great secret and humanity received it. 58|894|

Dohra

Abandon evil deeds and serve Satiguru,

By fixing the name in the mind, transmigration comes to an end. 59|895|

Adil

O my foolish mind, remember the name day and night,

Otherwise your opportunities will be lost,

Reflect on the ephemerality of life,

Leave aside bad deeds and recite the peerless name. 60|896|

Dohra

Sing the praise of Prabhu and in one moment liberation is achieved,

Without devotion, there is nothing but continual rebirth.61|897|

Savaiyya

That one who protects the entire world, everything is immersed in him,
Thieves, kings, animals, and living creatures all come from Prabhu,
O mind, reflecting on there is only comfort and no harm,
All I can say is that one should sing his praises.62|898|

Dohra

Just as destiny is inscribed on one's forehead by the one who writes,
This is how the light emerges, reflect upon that. 63|899|

Savaiyya

The listener exists because Prabhu wishes him to praise him,
Leaving anger, forgetting pain, he has the name in his mind,
Leaving aside false deeds, he is immersed in the service of the good people and
enjoys the elixir of that service,
Affection towards Hari is good, it removes the gross desires of the body.64|900|

Soratha

All comfort and respect comes from love of the name,
Transmigration ceases with meditation upon the name.65|901|

Savaiyya

Singh the praises of Prabhu, and you will not take rebirth,
Only this will make you conscious, without it you will repent,
This falsehood in which you are immersed will be of no aid,
Leave this aside and establish your foundation on the service of the one.66|902|

Dohra

Happiness arises in the heart that serves Satiguru,
In the true *sangat* one realizes Prabhu Puran Gurudev. 67|903|

Adil

Prabhu Puran Gurudev can be found in the true *sangat*,
Hari is immanent in everyone in the same way,
He who listens to the teachings and keeps them in his heart,
Without the creator, this union can not be achieved.68|904|

Dohra

Without the creator, listen O friend, who can hear his name and who can say it?
Many ages have passed without a glance of Gurudev.69|905|

Adil

All manner of delusion will arise again,
Having a *darshan* of the majestic Guru, all merit is obtained,
Every affliction is removed and the delusion of existence is destroyed,
O my, there is only one support, remain devoted to that one. 70|906|

Dohra

Drinking *amrit*, remain content, and serve the good ones,
This difficult to obtain human life, redeem it in an instant. 71|907|

Savaiyya

Your birth is successful if his light settles in the heart,
Destroying the enemies, you are immersed in the one, forgetting all delusion,

With great affection attach yourself to the feet of Hari, and with the support of the
name acquire the nine treasures,
His light illuminates the four quarters, filled with Prabhu's glorious name.72|908|

Dohra

At the place of the Guru, the melody of his victorious verse resounds,
How can I express your activities, they are the subject of endless praise. 73|909|

Adil

Your light is embodied in a beautiful form,
Your boundless praises pleases the virtuous ones,
Your praise can never be fully expressed,
Your merits are infinite and we sing them.74|910|

Dohra

O Friends, engage in the praise of Prabhu day and night,
Singing songs of Prabhu at your door. 75|911|

Chaupai

Unfathomable, his ways are infinite,
No one can relate your expanse.
Standing apart from creation, bestower of happiness,
Loving adoration, all greatness is yours. 76|912|

Madhubhar Chhand

Reflect in your heart, upon such sight,
As a gambler, who wrings his hand after he loses.77|913|
Upon such a sight, of Murare,

He who is everpresent, of beautiful form. 78|914|
 Creating such forms, which are incalculable,
 Providing nourishment he is without support. 79|915|
 Such divine play, yet unmoving,
 Fashioning such an expanse, that is without form. 80|916|
 Deserving of endless praise, reflect upon this,
 A rare novelty, this wise master. 81|917|
 Removing all fear, destroying all illusions,
 Beyond everything, that is his vision.82|918|
 No praise is adequate, to account for the master,
 Without beginning or end, beyond spells and charms. 83|919|
 The virtuous remember you, they know the master,
 Who is everpresent, without creation, formless. 84|920|
 The compassionate Satiguru, destroys death,
 Breaks all fetters, with his perfect vision.85|921|
 Of infinite praise, removing all obstacles,
 The Guru full of virtue, the virtuous ones remember you. 86|922|
 Of singular form, beauty embodied,
 With singular appearance, yet manifold play. 87|923|
 Beyond description, unfathomable ways,
 Endless praise given, by all creatures. 88|924|
 The excellent Sikhs, reflect upon this,
 Reciting these verses, viewing this vision. 89|925|
 Removing all fear, destroying illusion,
 Greatly pleased, seeing all. 90|926|
 Removing worry, a support of all creatures,
 Happiness in the heart, breaking the noose of death.91|927|
 Liberated, fulfilling all desires,

Dwelling at his feet, revelling there.92|928|

Dohra

No one can fully relate his unfathomable wondrous story,
Even if Ganapati wrote for all of eternity, he would not be able to write it down.
93|929|

Bhujang Prayat Chhand

Brahma uttered the four *Vedas*,
At the end he stated that your praise is infinite.
Even if Ganapati has an endless amount of pages,
He will not be able to reach your limit.94|930|
Even if Saraswati had innumerable forms,
She would not be able to fathom your praise.
It is beyond any description,
How can his own creation even gauge its extent?95|931|
Thousands and thousands reached their end searching for your limit,
They could not come to any boundaries.
A thousand descriptives emerging from their mouths,
They recite new epithets but still cannot exhaust your expanse.96|932|
I only have one tongue, how can I possibly describe him,
It is like only drinking one drop of water from a full pitcher of water.
I am a lowly wretch, my intelligence is not fit for this task,
Otherwise how could I have narrated your story?97|933|

Dohra

Whatever praise I have been able to relate, is due to your transformative *darshan*.

Please grant me whatever you find appropriate, you are perfect, you are my protection.98|934|

Thus concludes the account in *Sri Gursobha* of All Praise.

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