

BANI OF BHAGATS

**(Lives and selected works of saints included in
Sri Guru Granth Sahib)**

by
Dr. G.S. Chauhan

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(Free of Cost)

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Author :

G.S. Chauhan

B-202, Shri Ganesh, Appts.,
Plot No. 12-B, Sector : 7, Dwarka,
New Delhi - 110075

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Dr. Inderjit Kaur

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Dedication

*This little work is dedicated to the
Bhagti movement saints,
but for whom India would have lost
the ancient culture and religious heritage.
Inclusion of Bhagat Bani in Sri Guru Granth Sahib,
thus preserving it for posterity is a
great contribution by
Shri Guru Arjun Dev.*

Foreward

The author, Dr. G.S. Chauhan, is an Electrical Engineer and a retired General Manager from the Indian Railways. After retirement in 1991, he has taken up the study of the Sikh Scriptures and also those of the other Indian Religions as an avocation. He has already translated Guru Nanak Dev's Japji Sahib and Guru Arjan Dev's Sukhmani Sahib in English and brought out these two books in a trilingual format. These books have been well-received and found useful, particularly, by the Non-Punjabi Readers.

Likewise, in the present book-'Bani of Bhagats' the author has taken great pains in studying the work of 15 self-realized saints of the Bhagti Movement Fame, 11 Bhattas and 3 Sikhs, which are included in Sri Guru Granth Sahib. He has taken up only the selected works of these authors and classified them under various heads such as : Uncertainty of Human Existence, Real Happiness, Secret of Self-Realization, Hypocrisy, Self-Criticism, Unity of All Religions, Victory over Illusive Power (Maya), Self-Control, Unavailing Rituals–Pilgrimages and Holy Baths, Unity of Creator and His Creation, Fear and Ignorance, True Religion, Non-violence, Honesty, Company of Saints, Complete Surrender to God, Worry and Anxiety, Prayer, Austerity and Simplicity, various Attributes of the Almighty and so on. I hope this book will go a long way in benefitting the large range of readers exuding interest in the Sikh School of Thought.

Last, but not the least, I am thankful to the author for entrusting me with the job of proof-reading and getting the book printed under the aegis of the All India Pingalwara Charitable Society (Regd.), Amritsar. I am also very grateful to Dr. Inderjit Kaur, Patron President of the Society for granting her gracious go-ahead in this matter.

Ar. Mukhtar Singh Goraya
Hony. Secreatry,
Pingalwara, Amritsar.

Preface

Eleventh to fourteenth centuries were very disturbed times in North India due to repeated invasions by Muslim Tribes from the West. Spiritualism was being systematically destroyed, law and order situation was extremely poor, open loot and robberies were common. The public was crying in grief since economic and political activities were at very low ebb. The society was strongly divided into castes, high and low status, the rich and the poor, the landed and tenant communities, etc. The spiritual activities were confined to ritual worship and the spiritual leaders were just a farce.

In these difficult times, great saints like Swami Rama Nand, Kabir, Ravidas, Baba Sheikh Farid, Namdev, Trilochan and many others undertook to carry out a difficult task of reviewing Indians spiritual greatness and cultural heritage. One common link between them was that they were worshippers of one Unmanifest Lord and were against any distinctions in the human race. Although they were from different states, spiritual paths and cultural backgrounds, all of them gave the same message of love, peace, harmony and universal brotherhood.

Sri Guru Nanak Dev travelled far and wide in India and abroad i.e. Assam, Burma, Tibet, China in the East, Arabia and some parts of Africa in the west, Sri Lanka in the south and Kashmir and southern parts of Russia in the north. He met a very large number of self-realized saints, had discussions with them and recorded them in his own compositions for posterity. He also collected compositions of other saints wherever available like that of Sheikh Farid from his successors, Kabir, Ravidas, Rama Nand, Jaidev, Trilochan, etc. Compositions like "Sidh Gosht" and "Dakhni Oankar" are classical examples of his recorded discussions with Yogis and learned Brahmins.

Some of the saints were worshippers of manifest gods, like,

Namdev was devotee of Lord Vithal's Statue. But, with their spiritual progress, they all realized the Un-manifest Lord. By including the compositions of the saints from different spiritual paths, Sri Guru Arjun Dev has set a unique example of secular aspect of Sikhism.

Sri Parmahansa Ramakrishan has very aptly described this: "A truly religious man should think that other religions are also paths leading to Truth. We should always maintain an attitude of respect towards other religions". Similarly, Baba Virsa Singh of Gobind Sadan, Delhi has said, "All the Masters of different spiritual paths are brothers. If you show disrespect to a Master of other religion, the Master of that religion may forgive you, but your own Master shall not forgive for the disrespect shown to his brother". This message of universal brotherhood is spread throughout the compositions of saints and the Gurus.

Most of the saints whose compositions are included in Sri Guru Granth Sahib were practitioners of very hard and difficult spiritual practices which cannot be followed by worldly householders. Therefore, at many places, the Gurus have either clarified or supplemented the saints' message so that the householders do not get discouraged since they cannot follow practices or "Sadhanas" followed by the saints. Therefore, the Gurus have assured the disciples at many places that they need not go to the extent described by the saint and limit them within their capabilities.

The language used by the saints mostly is "Sant Bhasha". Since the saints travelled far and wide, they developed a lingua franca called "Sant Bhasha", but some like Jaidev have used Sanskrit language but most of the others have used common dialect.

The 11 Bhatts, Baba Sunder Ji, Rai Balwand and Satta, the bards, were disciples of the Gurus. They were very devoted, learned and self-realized. Guru Arjun Dev included their compositions in Sri Guru Granth Sahib as these compositions were also of very high spiritual value and explained very intricate spiritual problems on the spiritual path to help other devotees.

The compositions of saints are recoded in 22 ragas

(musical meters) apart from slokas and swayas. The total volume is very large. I have, therefore, tried to give brief life sketches of the saints and a few compositions to illustrate the range of ideas or subjects covered by them. Since no records are available about dates and place of birth of most of the saints, their parentage, etc., there are conflicting views expressed by different authors. I have mentioned the most accepted and logical details and avoided controversies. In any case, since the saints had achieved a state beyond time and space, any controversies about dates and place of birth are irrelevant.

This book was first published with original compositions in Roman script only. With the popularity of my two books on Gurbani i.e. "Japji Sahib" and "Sukhmani Sahib" wherein tri-lingual format was followed, Ar. Mukhtar Singh Goraya Hony. Secy., All India Pingalwara Charitable Society (Regd.), Amritsar very kindly suggested the same format for this book too and took exceptional pains to follow up with the printers and correct the proofs. I am grateful to him and Bibi Dr. Inderjit Kaur, Patron President, Pingalwara for publishing the book by Pingalwara.

My thanks are also due to my niece Ms. jaswinder Kaur who set the book on computer originally with great devotion and painstakingly.

I am sure this little book will help the readers to appreciate the great service rendered by the Bhagti movement saints to humanity by preaching love of God, universal brotherhood and guiding the devotees on the spiritual path by giving them practical wisdom.

The readers are requested to kindly advise me of any mistake so that the same can be corrected in future editions.

25th December 2008
Bangalore

G.S. Chauhan
B-202 Shree Ganesh Apptts.
Plot No. 12-B; Sector 7, DWARKA
New Delhi-110075
Tel : 011-25086357
Email : gschauhan1@rediffmail.com

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