

Kartarpur to the Damdami Recension of Sikh Scripture

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Like other great religions of the world Sikhism also have its own scripture known as Sri Guru Granth Sahib. It is not merely a Scripture but holds the status of a Living Guru from which the Sikhs seek counsel for their spiritual as well as temporal affairs. Its first canonization took place in the hands of Guru Arjan in 1604 and it was known as Adi Granth. As it is in the custody of descendents of Dhir Mal who had settled at Kartarpur (near Jalandhar), thus it came to be known as *Kartarpuri Bir*. The final canonization of the Sikh Scripture was done by Guru Gobind Singh in 1706 at Damdama Sahib, Talwandi Sabo. The Text finalized by the Tenth Master was known as *Damdami Bir* of the Sikh Scripture. It was the *Damdami* version of the Sikh Scripture on which the Tenth Master has bestowed Guuship before his demise in Oct. 1708 at Nanded. The text of the Sikh Scripture before taking its final shape has passed through various stages of its history. The present study intends to focus on its journey and the textual issues involved in it. In order to identify the features of a particular version this study we will also look into the textual variations that had crept into the manuscripts of Sikh Scripture prior to 1706. Finally, it will look into the characteristic features of the *Damdami* version and the exact place i.e. Damdama Sahib where the final canonization was done.

It is well known that Guru Arjan took a gigantic task to canonize the Sikh Scripture and it was duly installed in Darbar Sahib Amritsar in 1604. It comprised the sacred writings of first five Sikh Gurus, medieval Hindu Bhagatas, Muslim Sufis and some God oriented persons associated with Guru Arjan and his predecessors. In the liturgical section *So Purakh* group of hymns was absent from it and it comprised only *Japu*, *Sodar* and *Sohila* sections. The whole text was arranged into thirty musical modes ending up with Parbhati mode, besides a well worked out scheme relating to the meter, genre and authorship. At that time Jaijawanti mode was absent from it because the Sikh Gurus and the Bhagats had not composed any hymn in it. It was installed in Darbar Sahib Amritsar in 1604 and some time scholars refer to it as the Adi Granth. It continued to be there until it moved to Kartarpur near Jalandhar due to some historical factors. Because of its

location it is known as *Kartarpuri Bir*. Nowadays it is displayed annually only on the day of Vaisakhi.

For the purpose of recitation and installation of Sikh Scripture in the Sikh shrines at different places more copies of the AdiGranth were required. One of such a copy had been done at the behest of Bhai Bano, a Sikh of the Fifth Guru. He belonged to a village named Khara Mangat and it also contained some extra canonical writings, hence it came to be known as *Khari Bir* i.e. brackish, or spurious. It is worth noting that though the text of *Khari Bir* is said to be a copy of the Text fixed by Guru Arjan but on close scrutiny we find that it carries about twenty five text variants. Its most significant textual features which fall in the category of extra canonical writings and have been reported by the veteran as well as present day scholars are as under:

1. *Dhar amber vich belri...Gauri mode pada* attributed to Kabir.
2. *Aaudhu so jogi guru mera...Sorthi mode pada* attributed to Kabir.
3. *Ran jhunjhara gao sakhi...Ramkali chhant* full version attributed to Guru Arjan.
4. *Manu hamaro badhio mai kawal nain...Mira Bai pada* in raga Maru.
5. *Chhadi man hari bimukhan ko...instead of one line Surdas'full pada* in Sarang.

Besides the above some other spurious writings which have been recorded after the *Mundawani* also feature in the *Khari* recension. These are:

1. *Jitdar lakh Muhammda...3 salokas* attributed to Guru Nanak.
2. *Bai atish aab khak...15 salokas* attributed to Guru Nanak.
3. *Haqiqat rah mukami raje Shivnbh ki....*
4. *Siahi ki bidhi....*
5. *Ratanmala, 'asan sadh Niralam...'* 25 stanzas attributed to Guru Nanak.

In addition to the above some other variations regarding authorship, *gharu*, arrangement of text, dropped text etc. have also been noticed by the scholars in the above recension. It seems our scholars have limited access to the manuscripts, thus they have depended on the data of one and another to determine the variant readings that are the characteristic features of the *Khari* version. Now we have at our disposal a lot of manuscripts which are

available for academic studies. An examination of these manuscripts suggests that the *Khari* version enjoyed a wide circulation in the seventeenth and eighteenth century, especially outside the Punjab in the Sikh shrines that have been established on the major trade routes by the Udasis and Khatri of Punjab. With the passage of time this text family has developed into other minor or sub-versions, a fact which has been ignored by many a scholar. The unique features of these versions have not found proper attention at the hands of text critics. In the manuscripts belonging to the *Khari* version family following variants are quite visible but they have remained unnoticed so far:

1. Some of the manuscripts of *Khari* variety include the hymns of Guru Tegh Bahadur but Jaijaiwanti mode has no fixed place. It occurs either after Gauri or before or after Jaitsari. There are very few manuscripts in which it comes after Parbhati. Similarly, *salokas* of Ninth Master have no fixed place. They have been entered either after Mundawani or after the spurious writings mentioned above or after the *salokas* of Kabir.
2. There are some MSS in which hymns of Guru Tegh Bahadur have been recorded later on by a secondary scribe on the blank space available at the end of a raga. Examples of putting the whole mass of Guru Tegh Bahadur's hymns including the *salokas* at one place are not uncommon.
3. In some of the MSS master index of the ragas and hymns is not found at the beginning. The index of hymns of each raga has been affixed at the beginning of a respective raga.
4. In the *Khari* version we have MSS which comprise the *Bani* of the Sikh Gurus alone. The writings of the Bhagats have been excluded altogether.
5. We have the MSS in which the writings of the Sikh Gurus and that of the Bhagats instead of recording them in the respective modes have been recorded separately.
6. There are MSS where instead of following the fixed raga pattern, writings have been arranged on the basis of authors.
7. To distinguish the Sikh Gurus instead of *Mahalla* the honorific of *Patshahi* has been employed.
8. There are MSS which at the end of index carry another instruction, *Varan ka Bandhej*, i.e. arrangement of the *Vars* included in the Sikh scripture. It is not raga

oriented but preference is to the authors. For Example *Vars of Mahalla 1, Vars of Mahalla 3* and so on.

9. So far scholars have taken note of only one extra canonical *chhant* attributed to Guru Arjan. But there are MSS which carry a number of extra canonical writings attributed to the Sikh Gurus but the scholars are totally ignorant about their existence.
10. Most of the *Khari* version MSS has attributed 54th *saloka* of Ninth Master, '*Balu hoaa bandhan chhute...*' to Mahalla 10.
11. Some of the MSS also carry a *Sakhi* attributed to Guru Arjan, '*Guru bolia panj kamm kare...*'
12. Examples of Text of Vars where tunes have been dropped are also found.
13. Another extra canonical *pada*, '*Nau nidhi parsi...*, of Trilochan in Gujri mode has also found its way into the text.
14. Similarly, another extra canonical *pada*, '*Saat samund ja ki hai kirni...*, in Dhanasri attributed to Namdev has also found entry into the manuscripts.
15. *Khari* version MSS also has the tendency to record some of the *salokas* of Mahalla 1 included in *Salok Varan te Wadhik* under the authorship of Mahalla 3.

The presence or absence of above mentioned variant readings can provide vital lead to determine the text family of a manuscript from which it has descended. Anyway presence of above variants in a manuscript suggests that it belongs to the *Khari* recension or its branch.

There is no denying the fact that Guru Tegh Bahadur's hymns, especially after his martyrdom in 1675, have also found their way into the manuscripts of Sikh Scripture. However, as discussed above there was no set pattern to record them. There was no unanimity among the scribes regarding the inclusion/exclusion of liturgical section known as *So Purakh* hymns. A number of spurious writings attributed to the Sikh Gurus and Bhagats have also found their way into the manuscripts of Sikh Scripture. It has been noticed that all these manuscripts either owe their origin to *Khari* version or to the text families belonging to it. For example, Bura Sandhu Manuscript (1654 AD), GNDU MS#1084 (1666 AD), Jograj MS Pbi. University, Patiala (1667 AD) although do not

carry reference regarding the tunes (*dhunis*) of the Vars but on close examination we find that some of the characteristic features associated with the Khari version are present in them. No doubt some of the manuscripts do not carry reference towards the tunes of the Vars which has been taken as the characteristic feature of Lahori version and it has been attributed to the Mughal influence. However, there is no evidence in the Sikh history that the Mughal officials of Punjab directly or indirectly put pressure on the Sikhs to remove the *dhunis* from the Vars. Identification of such elements within the Panth that were interested in the exclusion of *dhunis* from the Vars, requires further investigations. In a way a plethora of manuscripts carrying unauthenticated Text and variation in arrangement was in circulation among the Sikhs towards the end of seventeenth century. Gurinder Singh Mann also confirms that most of the Adi Granth manuscripts written between 1642-1692 belong to the Banno/Khari version.

All these factors compelled Guru Gobind Singh to undertake the task to prepare the final version of Sikh Scripture. This exercise took place in 1706 at Damdama Sahib, Talwandi Sabo and this time Bhai Mani Singh, a legendry scholar of *Gurbani* assisted the Guru. The Text finalized under the direct supervision of Tenth Master is known as *Damdami* version of the Sikh Scripture. Important features of it are: the *Kachi-bani* writings that had become a permanent feature of the copies originating from *Khari Bir* were rejected once for all. Secondly, the *So Purakh* section of liturgical hymns was made a permanent part of the Sikh Scripture. Thirdly, Guru Tegh Bahadur's hymns of Jaijaiwanti mode, which the scribes had started inserting in a haphazard manner, was fixed as a separate mode and it was placed at the end of raga section. Finally, the *Salokas* of Guru TeghBahadur were placed at the end of *Salokas* of other Gurus known as *Saloka Varan ton Wadhik*. Some important manuscripts of Damdami version which were written before the ascendancy of Maharaja Ranjit Singh as the Sikh King in 1801 AD are available even today. They are as under:

1. One such recession is now available at Takhat Sri Hazur Sahib, Nanded. Its index informs that it has been written in 1764 Bk. (1707 AD). Guru Tegh Bahadur's hymns are at their proper place in each of the raga and Jaijaiwanti mode comes at no. 31st and it carries no extra material associated with the *Khari* version. This

manuscript is of great significance because it has been written immediately after the final canonization (in 1706) and since then is preserved in the archives of Takht Hazur Sahib, Nanded.

2. Another *Damdami* version manuscript is preserved at Takht Damdama Sahib, Talwandi Sabo and it is known as *Baba Dip Singh Wali Bir*. Though, it carries no date regarding its completion but from the orthographic style it looks to be quite old. No writing associated with the *Khari* version is found in it instead of that it incorporates all the features of *Damdami* version.
3. A manuscript of *Damdami* version known as *Sunehari Bir* is preserved in Toshakhana of Darbar Sahib, Amritsar. A note on its spine informs that it has been scribed by Baba Dip Singh in 1783 Bk (1726 Ad). One should not forget that Baba Dip Singh was the first Jathedar of Takht Damdama Sahib Talwandi Sabo till his martyrdom in 1757 AD. No extra canonical writing is found in the above *Bir*. Its text conforms to the *Damdami* version.
4. Baba Sudha Singh was the second Jathedar of Takht Damdama Sahib. He remained in this position from 1757 AD to 1762 AD till his martyrdom in 1762 AD in Wada Sikh Ghalughara. A manuscript of *Damdami* version prepared by him is preserved at Shahid Baba Sudha Singh Gurudwara at Village Kuthala near Barnala, Panjab. No extra canonical writing is found in it. Its text conforms to the *Damdami* version.
5. Another manuscript prepared by Mahant Ran Singh, the 5th Jathedar/Mahant at Sabo Ki Talwandi is found in Teona Pujarian, a village in the vicinity of Damdama Sahib, Talwandi Sabo. It is with the family of Jeet Singh who was a close relative of Ran Singh. Its index informs about its completion in 1828 BK. (1771 AD). Its text is in conformity with the *Damdami* version. Here it is worth noting that the 3rd and 4th Jathedar of Damdama Sahib, Sabo Ki Talwandi were Karam Singh and Natha Singh respectively. Both of them served for short terms as both got married and therefore moved to Sehjadpur and Loh Simli respectively. It was the tradition at Takht Damdama Sahib, Sabo Ki Talwandi that Jathedar/Mahant could not marry.

6. A manuscript written in 1771 AD carrying the features of Damdami version is available in the collection of Punjab Language Department, Patiala.
7. Another Damdami Version manuscript written in 1773 AD (1830 BK.) is found in the collection of Takht Hazur Sahib, Nanded. It was sent from Sri Akal Takht Sahib in 1860 Bk. and bears a stamp of Akal Takht in this regard. It is still being used for recitation there.
8. Punjabi Sahit Academy, Ludhiana has also in its collection a Damdami version manuscript written in 1797 AD.

Our search into the manuscripts of *Damdami* version has paid a rich dividend. Besides the above mentioned manuscripts we have located a number of *Damdami* version manuscripts written in eighteenth century that are available in different public and private libraries of Punjab.

Various scholars of Sikh studies such as Dr.Ganda Singh, Prof. Teja Singh, Dr. Piar Singh, Piara Singh Padam, Gurdit Singh, Principal Harbhajan Singh, Giani Harbhajan Singh Ludhiana, SGPC research scholar Randhir Singh, Dr. Tarlochan Singh Bedi, Prof. Anup Singh, Giani Garja Singh, Shamsheer Singh Ashok, G.B. Singh, ,Harnam Das, Bhagat Singh, Dhamtan Sahib Mahant Sahib Singh, Fauja Singh etc. have given their opinion on this issue. It would not be impertinent to mention here that some scholars namely G.B. Singh, Principal Harbhajan Singh, Gurinder Singh Mann, Randhir Singh and others have wrongly come to the conclusion that the final canonization had already taken place at Damdama Sahib in Anandpur Sahib that too much before the departure of Guru Gobind Singh from it in 1705. They have based their opinion because some of the manuscripts of Sikh Scripture done between 1675 and 1706 carry the hymns of Guru Tegh Bahadur. The mere fact that a manuscript carries *So Purakh* hymns in the liturgical section and hymns of the Ninth Master in different modes along with Jaijaiwanti mode as the 31st raga placed at the end of raga section does not make it a *Damdami Bir*. But the vital fact which they have ignored is that all these manuscripts carry extra canonical writings associated with the *Khari Bir*. Similarly, Jaijaiwanti mode hymns and the *salokas* of Guru Tegh Bahadur are not

inserted at their proper place in these manuscripts. Principal Harbhajan Singh refers to two manuscripts in Sikh reference library which were lost in 1984 AD operation Blue Star. These two manuscripts dated 1682 AD and 1691 AD respectively in which he indicates that raga Jaijaiwanti was properly recorded as the number 31 traga and there was no extra material in these manuscripts. Though he provides no details but confirms that in both of them folio mentioning 'Jyoti jot Samavney ka Chalitar' was there. Please note in almost all these manuscripts death date of Baba Gurdita is given after the 5thGuru,s death date and inclusion of Baba Gurdita's name as probable 6th Guru and some manuscripts having death dates of Ram Rai and his wife Panjab kaur folio,s were problems. Based on reasonable probability this may be the reason why death date folio was edited out in final standardization from Damdami version. Harnam Das Udasi also talks about this 1691 AD Manuscript as Damdami in few lines but no details are given. Review of complete manuscript contents is very essential for any textual Study. The Above problem can be explained thru examination of one so called Damdami Version at Chief Khalsa Diwan dated 1690 AD. In rags and shabad tatkara rag jaijaivanti is noted after raag parbhathi. Mahala 9 Bani is correctly placed in 15 Raagas but many banno version features in these Manuscripts noted as outlined above. Therefore it becomes necessary to study the complete manuscript and not Tatkara only for any final conclusion. The two above manuscripts dated 1682Ad and 1691AD respectively as reported by Principal Harbhajan Singh were lost in 1984ADBlue star operation. Principal Teja Singh and Dr Ganda Singh talks about 1675 AD manuscript at Dacca as noted by GB Singh. But GB Singh own textual analysis in his book pages 215-23 confirms that it was a Banno version. It appears to be written in Patna rather at Anandpur as on page 233 last slok #57 of 9 th guru is recorded as ' Kahu Nanak Yeh bipat mein ek oot Raghunath'. Labeling this salok as #57 is hall mark of manuscripts written at patna Sahib. We have also examined the 1691 AD manuscript of Guru Granth at Patna sahib as noted by Teja Singh and Dr Ganda Singh. The examination of this manuscript shows that so Purkh composition is hartaled. In rag tatkara rag jaijawanti is first entered after raag gauri. Then it is

hartalled and written after Raag Jaitsari. Similarly in shabad tatkara it is hartalled after writing after Gauri and then entered after Jaitsri raag. In pathh also first written after gauri .then hartalled and written after Jaitsri. In retrospect one can think that the scribe was not sure about the exact place of Raag Jaijavanti as 31st st raag as found in damdami version. This manuscript also contains other extra compositions of Khari version.

Similarly examination of Panjab Universty Manuscript # 1192. Confirms it to be Banno version as it includes many of the extra compositions of Khari version as noted above. Dr Piar Singh is right when he comments on its dating as “---- In conclusion it was plan to do fraud the simple minded believers” for details see Dr Piar Singh,s Book “Gatha Sri Aad Granth” pages 305and 306. Dating of this manuscript to 1674 AD before death of Guru Teg Bahadur is not correct because even historical evidence By Kavi Kankan confirms Bhai Jaita was entrusted by the Ninth Guru to carry his hymns to his son Gobind at Anandpur from his incarceration in Delhi. Kavi Kankan writes ‘Bani likh pothi kari bheji Jaite paas. Tin deenee Gobind Rai aise kar ardaas.196.’ See *Sanchhep Das Gur Katha krit Kavi Kankan*. If guru teg bahadur writes his saloks in Delhi Jail before his death. How then it got entered into manuscripts before his death?. This line of thinking requires further investigations.

On the basis of our study of the manuscripts of Sikh Scripture we can say that no manuscript written before 1706 and conforming strictly to the text of *Damdami* version, has been noticed so far. With large data available with digitalized technology at Panjabi Universty Patiala and GNDU Amritsar now correct knowledge about Kartatarpuri, Banno and Damdami version is available and can be verified. In our study all manuscripts before 1706 AD were found to be Banno version. 18th century Damdami Sabo Talwandi manuscripts as outlined above and their association with 1st,2nd and 5th Jathedar/Mahant at Sabo Ki Talwandi confirm that writing place of Damdami version was Damdama Sabo Ki Talwandi only and not the Anandpur Damdama as noted by few scholars. Many scholars have not seen above Damdami Manuscripts in detail as noted above and based their opinion on the basis of GB Singhs Book “Prachin Biaran Barey.” Thereby came to wrong conclusions. Similarly, Guru Gobind Singh had never been to Anandpur Sahib after 1706. He stayed for about nine months at Dadama Sahib, Talwandi Sabo and from

there he had departed for the Deccan. Moreover Guru Gobind Singh's literary activities at Talwandi Sabo are well recorded in the Sikh sources. The spot where the final canonization took place is commemorated in the form of a Sikh shrine known as **Gurudwara Likhansar**. The Tenth Master had blessed that in future this place (Damdama Sahib Talwandi Sabo) will emerge as a great seat of Sikh learning. Based on above textual analysis of various manuscripts, there is no doubt that Damdama Sahib Talwandi Sahib is the exact place where the finalization of Sri Guru Granth Sahib took place at the hands of Guru Gobind Singh. Interestingly it was the *Damdami* version of Sikh Scripture upon which Guru Gobind Singh bestowed Guruship before his demise in Oct. 1708 at Nanded, Maharashtra.