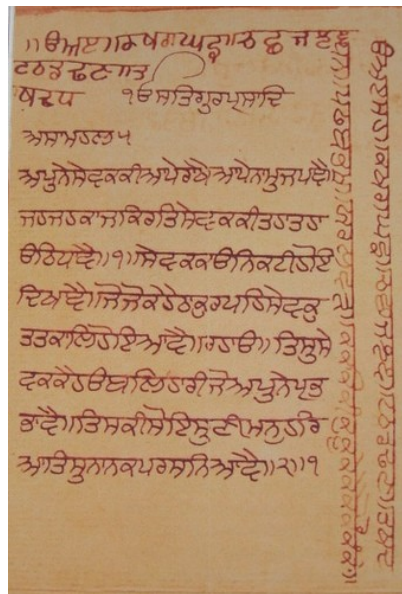


ਪ੍ਰੈਂਤੀਸ ਅੱਖਰੀ

'The Thirty-Five Letters *Paintīs Akharī*



By Dr Kamalroop Singh (Akali Nihang)

What is Paintīs Akharī?

The *Paintīs Akharī* is an acrostic *bani* about the Gurmukhi alphabet said to be by Guru Nanak Dev Ji. It is apocryphal as it is not in the Adi Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji. The Guru describes the experience or attributes of Ik Oaṅkār with each letter, or the non-divisible *advait* Vahiguru, which is the ecstatic experience of non-duality. The state of enlightenment or *Nirvana* is described, where the term *turia* is employed by Guru, he states that in actual fact there is no difference between the soul and the Super-soul, like water that merges back into water.

The cover shows the Thirty-Five letters of the Gurmukhi Alphabet written by Guru Arjan Dev Ji, and the *Muhārnī*, which is a special way to learn all the sounds in *Gurbani*. By the Guru writing the letters at the top and alongside his *Gurbani* we can safely conclude that Gurmukhi script itself is considered holy and is a spiritual language. G. B. Singh (1950) concluded that it was more ancient than even Sanskrit (which has Fifty-Two letters), and provided detailed impressions of ancient rock carvings of glyphs to prove it (See the table below). According to Prof Anurag Singh and the late Giani Sant Singh Maskeen some of them are also found in Turkmenistan. G. B. Singh has proved that development of all languages began with Runes and Hieroglyphics, which is a fascinating angle on the history of Gurmukhi. In the tradition it is said each sound resonates from a certain *chakra*, and is said to purify them (see the diagram by Sant Sher Singh on the next page). Each letter and word must be perfected via special methods in order to perfect the *banis*, this is known as *santhiā*.

these letters had for him and also proves he actually standardised the system of Gurmukhi letters as we know it today. On the final day of completing this document (16/1/16), I took a *Hukamnāmā* (or random edict or *shabad*) from Adi Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji and was amazed to see that it was in fact this composition the *Paṭī Likhī* (*ang* or p. 432). There is also a *Chanḍ* or metre in the Sri Dasam Granth Sahib Ji where the end of each letter, at the end of the verses, is one of the *Paintīs Akharī*, which is found in the *Krishanāvatār*.

The thirty-five Gurmukhi characters are given below. They are called the *varaṇamālā* (वरणमाला) or the *Paintīs Akharī* (ਪੈਂਤੀ ਅੱਖਰ). I have given the sounds in the transliteration scheme using the accepted international convention. Many people from different countries read these documents, and unfortunately in European languages the sounds of letters change from language to language, for example the letter h in Spanish. Therefore to be clear, the international convention has been employed, which can be studied, and it is the most correct method to Romanise Gurmukhi. This system keeps the actual letters and language intact which is important for many reasons. Below that I have included a diagram that shows where the sound of each letter comes from when we repeat each line in the *varaṇamālā*. This corresponds to the *chakra* system of yoga. There are references to them in *Gurbani*, for instance Bhagat Kabir Ji writes '*The chakras of the coiled Kundalini energy have been opened.*' I hope to run courses on this in the near future, as it is necessary to understand this to fully grasp the power and function of *Gurbani*, and to perfect our reading of it. Westerners generally have problems in pronouncing the last line of the *varaṇamālā* (ya ra la va ṛa), especially the retroflex ṛa. According to the tradition, this is for various reasons and is related to how sound is created and heard within the human body, but it can be rectified with practice and meditation.

Those who doubt the importance of the sounds of letters in the Sikh tradition, they should refer to verse nineteen of the *Jap Jī Sāhib* where the word or letter is praised by Guru Nanak Dev Ji. The first letter *Oaṛā* (ੳ) contains all the sounds in the *varaṇamālā*.

ੳ ਅ ਏ ਸ ਹ

ਕ ਖ ਗ ਘ ਙ (Gutturals)

ਚ ਛ ਜ ਝ ਵ (Palatals)

ਟ ਠ ਡ ਢ ਣ (Cerebrals)

ਤ ਥ ਦ ਧ ਨ (Dentals)

ਪ ਫ ਬ ਭ ਮ (Labials)

ਯ ਰ ਲ ਵ ਝ

o a e sa ha

ka kha ga gha ña

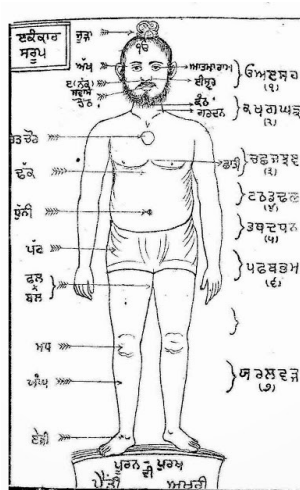
ca cha ja jha ña

ṭa ṭha ḍa ḍha ṇa

ta tha da dha na

pa pha ba bha ma

ya ra la va ṛa



Taken from *Param Akharī kī Paintī Akharī* by Sher Singh (1942)²

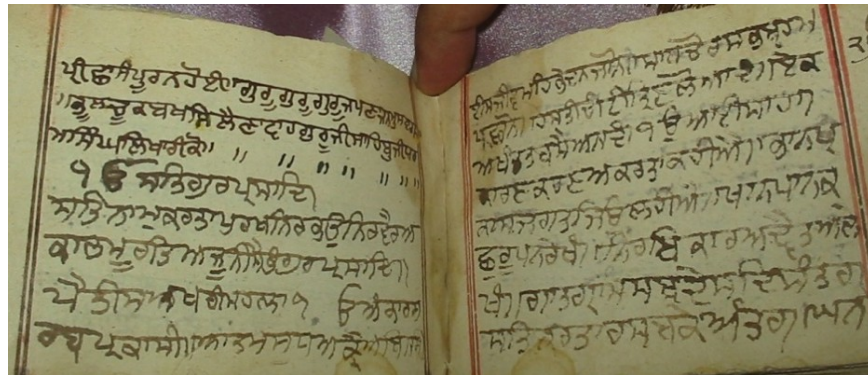
The *Paintīs Akharī* is a rosary of the thirty-five letters of the Gurmukhi alphabet above. It is the spiritual explanation of each of the letters. Each sentence begins with each letter

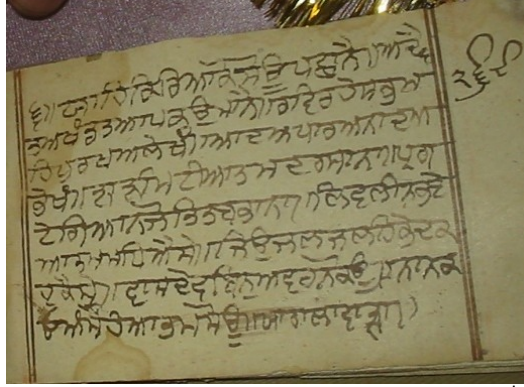
² I was lucky enough to meet a student of Sant Sher Singh 'Nirmala', whose name is Sant Baba Giana Singh who is now over 105 years old and a master of *Jhatka-Gatka*. I went through this book at his Divine Feet, and he generously taught even more than what is contained within it. I am forever indebted to him.

in turn. Bhai Kanh Singh Nabha says that this has been written by a Sikh, however, traditional organisations like the Nirmale, Taksal, Udasi, Sewa Panthi and Akali Nihang Singh Panths all believe this to be the work of the Guru. This includes great Sikh saints like Sant Baba Bhagwan Singh Ji. It is apocryphal and not in the Adi Sri Guru Granth Sahib, but as we shall see it is still found in ancient handwritten manuscripts.

In terms of ritualistic practice, this composition is for *Japa*, or to be repeated. Some great Sikh Masters say to read the *Mūl Mantra* before this composition and to finish it with a *Shaktī mantra* (there are two different types), at the end to complete it, known as a *paisachī*. One of them sounds like an *Udasi mantra* at the end, while the other *mantra* is said to have been given to Guru Gobind Singh on revealing the *Bhagauti*. The *Paintīs Akharī* was said to be practiced on the full moon, but others believe this is against *Gurmat* or the thinking of the Guru, like Kanh Singh of Nabha. The *Sundar Guṭkā* published by Sant Mohan Singh contains apocryphal *banīā* that are now considered by some as being false *bānī* and unworthy to read, such as the *Paintīs Akharī*.

This *bani* was probably an oral tradition that got written down at a later point. The old manuscripts show that as certain letters have been changed like *Abinashi* to *Avinashi*. As this *Paintīs Akharī* is not in the Adi Guru Granth Sahib Ji, this may give reason to believe that this composition was a part of the learning process, in order to recite *Gurbani*. Many ancient manuscripts like the one below contain this *bani*.





The *Paintī Akharī* in a manuscript from the 18th century.

Photograph © by the author.³

Taken at Baba Bagel Singh Nihang Museum, Sri Bangla Sahib, Delhi.

Translation of the Paintī Akharī

ਓਅੰਕਾਰ ਸਰਬ ਪ੍ਰਕਾਸੀ॥

ਆਤਮ ਸੁਧ ਅਕ੍ਰੈ ਅਬਿਨਾਸੀ॥

ਈਸ ਜੀਵ ਮੇਂ ਭੇਦ ਨ ਜਾਨੇ॥

ਸਾਧ ਚੋਰ ਸਭਿ ਬ੍ਰਹਮ ਪਛਾਨੇ॥

ਹਸਤੀ ਚੀਟੀ ਤ੍ਰਿਣ ਲੋ ਆਦੇ॥

ਏਕ ਅਖੰਡਤ ਬਸੈ ਅਨਾਦੇ॥੧॥

ਉ ਆ ਈ ਸਾ ਹਾ॥

oaṅkāṛ sarab prakāśī.

ātam shudh akrai abināsī.

īsa jīva meṅ bhed na jāno.

sādh chor sabhi brahamu pachhāno.

hasatī chīṭī triṇa lau ādaṅ.

ek akhaṇḍat basai anādaṅ. 1.

u ā ī sā hā.

³ *Prīchhiā Pātshāhī* 10, New Delhi: Baba Baghel Singh Museum, Bangla sahib.

Oankar is the Creator of all. From the sound Oaṁ all life sprang forth. *Akār*, *Ukār*, and *Makār* the three syllables, that give birth, preserve and destroy. Like God, generation – order - destruction. In numerology Oankar is 108 – the One, the zero, and the Infinite.

The soul is pure beyond actions and Eternal.

Do not differentiate between any forms of life.

Recognise a Saint or thief as the Creator.

As the Elephant, Ant, Grass, are of the [same] basic elements.

So, does the Unbroken One dwell Eternally in them.**1.**

u ā ī sā hā.

ਕਾਰਣ ਕਰਣ ਅਕਰਤਾ ਕਹੀਏ॥

ਭਾਨ ਪ੍ਰਕਾਸ ਜਗਤ ਜਿਉ ਲਹੀਏ॥

ਖਾਨ ਪਾਨ ਕਛੁ ਰੂਪ ਨ ਰੇਖੰ॥

ਨਿਰਬਿਕਾਰ ਅਦੈਤੁ ਅਲੇਖੰ॥

ਗਾਤ ਗ੍ਰਾਮ ਸਭ ਦੇਸ ਦਿਸੰਤਰ॥

ਸਤਿ ਕਰਤਾਰ ਸਰਬ ਕੇ ਅੰਤਰ॥

ਘਨ ਕੀ ਨਿਆਈਂ ਸਦਾ ਅਖੰਡਤ॥

ਕ੍ਰਿਆਨ ਬੋਧ ਪਰਮਾਤਮ ਪੰਡਤ॥੨॥

ਕਾ ਖਾ ਗਾ ਘਾ ਛਾ॥

kāraṇ karaṇ akaratā kahīe.

bhān prakās jagat jiu lahīe.

khān pān kachhu rūp na rekhañ.

nirabikār adaivat alekhañ.

gāt grām sabh desh disaṅtar.

sati karatār sarab ke aṅtar.

ghan kī niāñ sadā akhaṇḍat.

niān bodh paramātām paṇḍat.**2.**

kā khā gā ghā ṇā.

The Doer of all, [yet] said to be the One beyond-Creating.

The light that sustains the whole Universe.

Without garb, and with no form or outline.

Without pollution, non-divisible, and Indescribable.

In the body, cities, and in all countries.

The True Creator is in all.

Beyond all differences and always Eternal.

Beyond the intellect is the Soul, one who knows it is the true scholar.**2.**

kā khā gā ghā ñā.

ਚਾਪ ਗਯਾਨ ਕਰਿ ਜਾਹਿ ਬਿਰਾਜੈ॥

ਛਾਯਾ ਦ੍ਰਿਤ ਸਗਲ ਉਠ ਭਾਜੈ॥

ਜਾਗਤ ਸੁਪਨ ਸਖੋਪਤ ਤੁਰੀਆ॥

ਆਤਮ ਭੂਪਤਕੀ ਏਹਪੁਰੀਆ॥

ਝੁਨਤਕਾਰ ਅਨਹਦ ਘਨਘੋਰੰ॥

ਤ੍ਰਿਕੁਟੀ ਭੀਤਰਿ ਅਤਿ ਛਬ ਜੋਰੰ॥

ਵਾਣਤ ਜੋਗੀ ਇਆ ਰਸ ਬਾਤਾ॥

ਸੋਹੰ ਸ਼ਬਦ ਅਮੀ ਰਸ ਮਾਤਾ॥੩॥

ਚਾ ਛਾ ਜਾ ਝਾ ਵਾ॥

chhāp gāna kari jāhi birājai.

chhāyā daivat sagal uṭh bhājai.

jāgat supan sakhopat turīā.

ātam bhūpatakī chapurīā.

jhunatakāra anahad ghanaghorañ.

trikuṭī bhītari ati chhab jorañ.

ñāṇata jogī iā rasa bātā.

sohañ shabad amī ras mātā.**3.**

chā chhā jā jhā ñā.

Take the bow of self-knowledge and be at ease.

The shadow of duality will all get up and run.

In waking, dreaming, dreamless sleep, and the Fourth State [Nirvana].

The Creator of the soul is this completion.

Within which you will see the divine lightening, unstruck sound, and thunder.

Within the meeting at the third eye is much glory.

Only an experienced yogi knows the essence within this bowl.

Who with the word Soham drinks in the elixir.3.

chā chhā jā jhā ñā.

ਟਾਰਣ ਭ੍ਰਮਨ ਅਘਨ ਕੀ ਸੈਨਾ॥

ਸਤਿਗੁਰੁ ਮੁਕਤਿ ਪਦਾਰਥ ਦੈਨਾ॥

ਠਾਕਤ ਦੁਬਿਧਾ ਨਿਰਮਲ ਕਰਣੰ॥

ਡਾਰਿ ਸੁਧਾ ਮੁਖ ਅੁਪਦਾ ਹਰਣੰ॥

ਢਾਪਤਿ ਦ੍ਰੈਤ ਅੰਧੇਰੀ ਮਨ ਕੀ॥

ਣਾਸਤਿ ਗੁਰ ਭ੍ਰਮਤਾ ਸਭ ਤਨ ਕੀ॥੩॥

ਟਾ ਠਾ ਡਾ ਢਾ ਣਾ॥

ṭāraṇ bhraman aghan kī sainā.

satiguru mukati padārath dainā.

ṭhākat dubidhā niramal karaṇaṇ.

ḍāri sudhā mukh aupadā haraṇaṇ.

ḍhāpati daivat andherī man kī.

ṇāsati gur bhramatā sabh tan kī.4.

ṭā ṭhā ḍā ḍhā ṇā.

All loss is from the ignorance caused by the army of sin.

The True Guru gives the treasure of liberation.

Who covers and gets rid of doubt and purifies.

Who puts the ambrosia into the mouth which dispels pain.

Who stops duality and the darkness of the mind.

The Guru rids all the doubt within the whole body.4.

ṭā ṭhā ḍā ḍhā ṇā.

ਤਾਰਣਗੁਰੂ ਬਿਨਾ ਨਹਿ ਕੋਈ॥
ਸ੍ਰਤਿ ਸਿਮ੍ਰਿਤਿ ਸਭ ਬਾਤ ਪਰੋਈ॥
ਥਾਨ ਅਦ੍ਵੈਤ ਤਬੀ ਜਾਇ ਪਰਸੈ॥
ਮਨ ਬਚ ਕਰਮ ਗੁਰੂ ਪਗ ਦਰਸੈ॥
ਦਾਰਿਦ ਰੋਗ ਮਿਟੇ ਸਭ ਤਨਕਾ॥
ਗੁਰ ਕਰੁਣਾ ਕਰ ਹੋਵੈ ਮੁਕਤਾ॥
ਧੰਨ ਗੁਰਦੇਵ ਮੁਕਤਿ ਕੇ ਦਾਤੇ॥
ਨਾਨਾ ਨੇਤ ਬੇਦ ਜਿਸ ਗਾਤੇ॥੫॥

ਤਾ ਥਾ ਦਾ ਧਾ ਨਾ॥

tāraṇagurū binā nahi koī.
srati simriti sabh bāt paroī.
thān adaivat tabī jāi parasai.
man bach karam gurū pag darasai.
dārid rog miṭe sabh tanakā.
gur karuṇā kar hovai mukatā.
dhaṇna guradev mukati ke dāte.
nānā net bed jis gāte.5.

tā thā dā dhā nā.

In this worldly ocean the Guru is the only boat.

This is recorded in the Shastras and Simritis.

Whose place is none duality which is found if we strive [for it].

Mind, words and deed, should be offered to the vision of the Guru's feet.

All pain and disease is then rid of from the body.

The Guru is merciful and grants liberation.

Praise the Guru the giver of liberation.

The Vedas sing you are not this not that.5.

tā thā dā dhā nā.

ਪਾਰਬ੍ਰਹਮ ਸਭ ਮਾਹਿ ਸਮਾਨਾ॥

ਸਾਂਤਿ ਸਿਧਾਂਤਿ ਕੀਓ ਬਖਯਾਨਾ॥

ਫਾਸ ਕਟੀ ਦ੍ਰੈਤ ਗੁਰ ਪੂਰੇ॥

ਬਾਜੇ ਸਬਦ ਅਨਾਹਦ ਤੁਰੇ॥

ਬਾਣੀ ਬ੍ਰਹਮ ਸਾਥ ਭਯੋ ਮੇਲਾ॥

ਭੰਗ ਦ੍ਰੈਤ ਹਉ ਸਦਾ ਅਕੇਲਾ॥

ਮਾਨ ਅਪਮਾਨ ਦੋਉ ਜਰ ਗਏ॥

ਜੋਉ ਥੇ ਸੋਉ ਪੁਨ ਭਏ॥੬॥

ਪਾ ਫਾ ਬਾ ਭਾ ਮਾ॥

pārabraham sabh māhi samānā.

sānti sidhānti kīo bakhayānā.

phās kaṭī daivat gur pūre.

bāje shabad anāhad tūre.

bāṇī braham sāth bhayo melā.

bhaṅg daivat hau sadā akelā.

mān apamān doū jar ge.

joū the soū pun bhe.6.

pā phā bā bhā mā.

The great Creator is in everything all around.

This is explained from the knowledge of Oneness that creates peace.

The perfect Guru cuts the noose of duality.

The Shabad resounds with the unstruck sound and flutes.

When meeting with the word of the Creator [bani].

Duality is destroyed and Oneness is eternal.

Honour and dishonour are have both been burnt away.

Merging into the original form is the only true charity.6.

pā phā bā bhā mā.

ਯਾ ਕਿਰਯਾ ਕਉ ਸੋਉ ਪਛਾਨੈ॥

ਅਦ੍ਰੈਤ ਅਖੰਡ ਆਪ ਕਉ ਮਾਨੈ॥

ਰਵਿ ਰਹੇ ਸਭ ਮਹਿ ਪੁਰਖ ਅਲੇਖੰ॥
ਆਦਿ ਅਪਾਰ ਅਨਾਦ ਅਭੇਖੰ॥
ੜਾੜ ਮਿਟੀ ਆਤਮ ਦਰਸਾਨਾ॥
ਪ੍ਰਗਟੇ ਗਯਾਨ ਜੋਤਿ ਤਬ ਭਾਨਾ॥
ਲਿਵਲੀਨ ਭਏ ਆਤਮ ਮਧ ਐਸੇ॥
ਜਿਉ ਜਲ ਜਲਹਿ ਭੇਦ ਕਹੁ ਕੈਸੇ॥
ਵਾਸਦੇਵ ਬਿਨ ਅਵਰ ਨ ਕੋਊ॥
ਨਾਨਕ ਓਅੰ ਸੋਹੰ ਆਤਮ ਸੋਊ॥੨॥

ਯਾ ਰਾ ਲਾ ਵਾ ਝਾ॥

yā kirayā kau soṁ pachhānai.
adaivat akhañḍ āp kau mānai.
ravi rahe sabh mahi purakh alekhañ.
ādi apār anād abhekhañ.
ṛāṛ miṭī ātam darasānā.
pragaṭe gayān joti tab bhānā.
livalīn bhe ātam madh aise.
jiu jal jalahi bhed kahu kaise.
vāsadev bin avar na koṁ .
nānak oañ sohañ ātam soṁ.7.

yā rā lā vā ṛā.

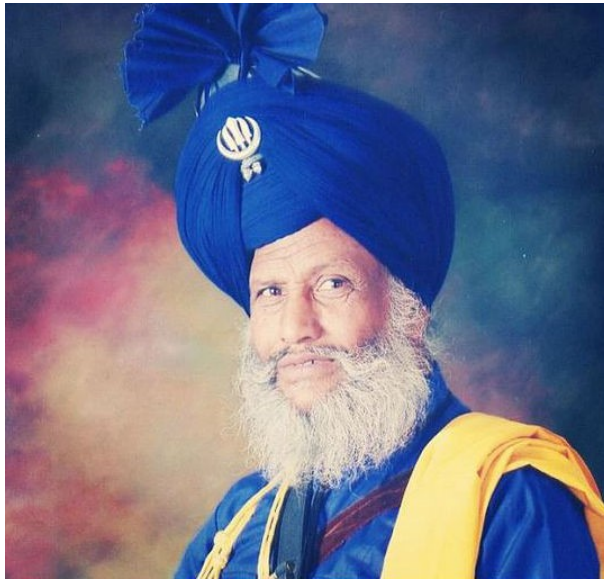
This action is recognised by those spiritual souls.
Who recognise themselves as Undivided and Unbroken.
In the Sun, in all forms is the Indescribable Being.
Before the beginning, unreachable, beyond boundary, with no garb.
All conflicts are resolved in self-realisation.
The lamp of knowledge then shines forth.
The connection with the soul occurs in the centre.
When water merges with water, how can one know the difference?

There is none other than Vasdev.

Says Nanak the soul is Oaṅ & Soham.⁷.

yā rā lā vā ṛā.

With the blessings of the Jathedars of Buddha Dal



The previous head of the *Shiromani Khalsa Panth Akali Buddha Dal Panjwa Takht Chalda Vahir Chakrvarti*, Vishav, Singh Sahib 96 Crori Jathedar Akali Baba Surjit Singh Nihang Singh, was in jail with Rajoana Sahib due to the SGPC and Akali Dal making their own puppet leader Balbir Singh. Please visit www.babasurjeetsingh.com to spread awareness about this injustice. This is what the Chinese government have done to his holiness the Dalai Lama and the Pancham Lama. We cannot allow this to happen to the head of the Khalsa Panth. The current head is now 96 Crori Jathedar Akali Baba Prem Singh Nihang Singh from Sachkhand Hazur Sahib.

About the Author

My name is Dr. Kamalroop Singh, I am a Sikh and a member of the Khalsa, and belong to the Nihang Singh order, under the leadership of 96 Crori Singh Sahib Jathedar Akali Baba Surjit Singh Nihang. I began my journey back in 1995, when I met some inspirational Sikhs. I have been reading about and practising as a Sikh from a young age, I took

initiation into the Khalsa in 1999. I have travelled around India and stayed with the Nihang Singhs and Sants, and I also took basic *santhia* from the Dam Dami Taksal in Amritsar. After finishing my degree in Chemistry I completed an MPhil and PhD in Sikh Studies. My chosen subject was the Dasam Granth Sahib, my thesis was titled 'Dasam Granth Re-examined'. A book titled 'The Granth of Guru Gobind Singh: Essays, Lectures and Translations' has been published with Gurinder Singh Mann, by Oxford University Press. 'Dasam Granth Questions and Answers' has been published which was written with Mann Sahib also, please see it at www.archimedespress.co.uk. I am a linguist and have worked for the Crown Prosecution Services and taught languages at the School of African and Oriental Studies. I have been a consultant to a number of museums and galleries around the world, and I regularly travel and teach about related subjects.

Many thanks to Dharama Kaur Khalsa who requested a translation of this *bani* to be made. We first discussed this was about ten years ago when I visited Espanola with Nihang Giani Sukha Singh! Please forgive any mistakes beloved Sadh Sangat jio and pray that I may continue serving the Guru Khalsa Panth Sahib.

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