

100 Shades of Grey

Verse Translation of Wiles of Women

(Triya Charitar of the Dasam Granth)

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Preface

The Triya Charitar of the Dasam Granth

The *primary anthology* of the Sikh religion is the *Adi Granth*, or *Guru Granth Sahib*, since installation as Guru, of its final compilation on the Leo new moon of 1704 CE, at Damdama Sahib, in the Sikh homeland, exactly one hundred years after installation of its original or *Adi Granth*, at the Golden Temple, or Darbar Sahib, Amritsar, Punjab, on the same date in 1604. Written and scripted in the Gurmukhi language, it is dedicated entirely to the devotion, or *Bhakti*, of a universal and personal God and therefore contains compositions from Sikh, Muslim and Hindu saints alike, as well as those of the Sikh Gurus and their disciples, in various musical meters and genres.

The *secondary anthology* of the Sikhs is the *Dasam Granth*, a more specifically Sikh national anthology, defining aspects of their initiation ceremony into the Khalsa, or Sikh nation, religion, history, culture, identity, literature, warfare and politics, or *Shakti*. It has therefore often been the subject of internal and external controversy from those who, while might be prepared to accept that Sikhs follow a distinctive religion, are determined to undermine their status as a separate nation. It was compiled and scripted in the same language and by the same scribe as that of the *Guru Granth Sahib*, by the martyr, Bhai Mani Singh, during his tenure as High Priest of the Akal Takht, Amritsar, appointed by the tenth Guru, Gobind Singh, who was its principal, if not, sole author although he maintained a coterie of 52 poets at his court, who composed a vast amount of literature, much of which, if not most, has been lost to posterity.

The largest portion of the anthology is comprised of Charito-Pakhyan, a collection of 405 'Depicted Legends' of Sikh literature, history and culture, in various poetic meters*, which though containing important elements of Sikh ceremonial such as the entirety of its epilogue, Chaupai Sahib, is largely secular in nature, alluding to folklore from the Sikh homeland and beyond, from the Middle East to South Asia.

Its significance lies partly, at least, in its outlook of envisioning a Sikh empire, later realised by the Sikhs, just as other regimes have commissioned similar ribaldic versions symbolic of their hegemony.

In Hinduism, the planet Jupiter, or guru of the gods, is ruled by Bhakti, whereas the planet Venus, or Shakti, is also a guru-that of the demons. While the former is expansive, universal, kind and merciful, the latter can be constricting, elitist, beautiful and cruel, or 'ugra'. Unlike Jupiter, Venus has no compunction to be moral, only aesthetic.

The dual Bhakti-Shakti concept, or Miri-Piri is espoused by Sikhism but even more explicitly in the concept of Guru Granth (Anthology) and Guru Panth (Commonwealth), culminating in the ambition for self-determination through political power or Raj Karega Khalsa (Sikh Raj).

As such, all forms of Shakti, or power, need to be recognised, and either harnessed or safeguarded against, including that of the divine, or not so divine, feminine, respectively. This, essentially is the thesis of the epic and its translation into verse is the first of its kind.

In stark contrast to other translations, this volume, which translates the first 100 or so of these tales, is consistent with the rhyming meter of the original in the Dasam Granth, as completed on the banks of the fifth river, Satluj, of the Sikh homeland, Punjab, on the eighth day after the Bhadrav (Leo) new moon, 1696 CE or 1753 Bikrami (a date referenced in the epilogue pertaining to an era identified with King Bikramjit Srail, 91st Charitar, and still prevalent). Hopefully therefore, it is both more authentic and accurate, as well as more appreciative.

Dr M S Srail

*Dohra-twelve syllable couplet,
Chaupai-eight syllable quatrain,
Arril-ten syllable quatrain,
Swaya-fourteen syllable quatrain,
Kabit-longer, inter-line-rhyming quatrain,
Chhand-prefix dependent variable length stanza.