

## Music of Guru Nanak

The music in accompaniment of singing of the word revealed caused a miracle effect on the listeners e.g., ਤਬ ਗੁਰੁ ਬਾਬੇ ਨਾਨਕ ਜੀ ਬਾਣੀ ਬੋਲੀ ਭੈਰੋ ਰਾਗ ਮਹਿ ਜਿ:

ਭੁੰਡੀ ਚਾਲ ਚਰਣ ਕਰ ਖਿਸਰੇ ਤੁਚਾ ਦੇਹ ਕੁਮਲਾਨੀ ॥  
ਭੈਰਉ ਮਹਲਾ ੧ ਘਰ ੨।੪। ਪੰਨਾ ੧੧੨੬)

ਤਬ ਓਹਿ ਗੋਬਿੰਦ ਲੋਕ ਗੁਰੁ ਬਾਬੇ ਨਾਨਕ ਜੀ ਕੀ ਚਰਨੀ ਲਾਗੈ, ਗੁਰੁ ਕੇ ਸਿਖ ਭਏ, ਗੁਰੂ ਗੁਰੂ ਲਾਗੇ ਜਪਣੇ, ਨਾਨਕ ਪੰਥੀ ਭਏ, ਉਨ ਕੈ ਮਨਿ ਸੰਤੋਖ ਆਇਆ, ਕਹਣੈ ਲਾਗੈ ਜਿ, ਪੰਨ ਗੁਰੁ ਬਾਬਾ ਨਾਨਕੁ, ਵਾਹਗੁਰੂ ਬਾਬਾ ਨਾਨਕ, ਸਤਿਗੁਰੂ ਬਾਬਾ ਨਾਨਕੁ। (ਜਨਮਸਾਖੀ ਮਿਹਰਬਾਨ ਵਾਲੀ)<sup>੧</sup>

Guru Nanak then recited ba:ni: in Bhairo Ra:g:

*Bhu:ndi: cha:l charankar khisre tucha deh kumla:ni: (Bharau M.1, p.1126)*

Then those good people fell at Guru Nanak's feet, became Sikhs of Guru Nanak, started reciting Guru, Guru; became Nanak *Panthis* (followers of Nanak) since they were completely satisfied. They said, "Great is Guru Baba Nanak; O God! What a Baba Nanak is. Baba Nanak is the True Guru."

What a magnanimous and instantaneous effect of his **communication** indeed! Such an impact of singing in accompaniment of the music is not found recorded any where else.

In Guru Nanak, music was a divine gift. Prof. Puran Singh in his book, "The Book of Ten Masters says "He (Nanak) came like song of heaven and began singing as he felt the touch of the breeze and saw the blue expanse of sky."<sup>2</sup> In Guru Nanak, Poetry blends with philosophy; metaphysics and music mingle, and contemplation and rasa (aesthetic joy) combine in a rare and unprecedented manner, spontaneously and meticulously.<sup>3</sup> Some have called Guru Nanak *ba:ni:* the music of the soul, a blossoming forth of the spiritual in man.

During Guru Nanak's time, music was greatly concerned with the religiously devotional poetry of the time and was extant in the tradition established by the Nath and Yogi minstrels in a few centuries earlier. The Indian classical music believes in the harmony of the expressed sentiments and its natural settings - the time and the season. Guru Nanak himself a musician par excellence, to whom music came naturally, set almost all the poetry to classical music. This included such compositions as adopted their forms from folk poetry. Guru Nanak as an expert man of the music could select the most appropriate *ra:gs* to match the mood and composed his hymns accordingly. The liquid notes of his music intensify the feelings and strengthen the sentiments and therefore help visibly in **effective communication**.

His sense of music lifted the common word to celestial height and has made some verses known for their profound content catchy as a hit song. The lyrical and the musical genius

is at its best in *Ba:ra:ma;ha: Tukha:ri*. It was Guru Nanak who first adopted music and poetry for the **communication of his gospel**. Perhaps he did it out of necessity, because no other medium could have been adequate to the range, depth and intensity of His Revelation. Thus Guru Nanak is a musical composer and his sublime numbers are most expressive when in sung in prescribed *ra:gs*.<sup>4</sup>

From the hymns of Guru Nanak, the *Ra:gs* and their types can be easily understood. He not only used the established *Sha:stri* *Ra:gs* but also the local *ra:gas* and the tunes of folk songs. There is type of musical compositions which consists of *sabds*, pads, or songs and which are meant to create pious feelings in the religious as well ordinary people. Ordinarily a metrical composition is sung to music, but in the compositions of saints most of the verses are metrical. They are regulated by *ra:gs* and *ra:ginis*. Guru Nanak has adopted 19 *ra:gs* out of the 31 of SGGGS for his verses in different genres.<sup>5</sup> These 19 *Ra:gs* viz Sri, Majh, Gauri, A:ssa, Gujri, Wadhans, Sorath, Dhana:sri:, Tilang, Su:hi, Bila:wal, Ra:mkali:, Tukha:ri:, Bhairav, Basant, Sa:rang, Mala:r and Prabha:ti. The total number of compositions is 974. All hymns contained in Guru Nanak's hymns are classified in different *Ra:gs* except the first hymn 'Japji, and Swayyas and Sloks' at the end.

**Table 2: Showing various Ragas and the type of composition**

Sr	Ra:g	Shabad	Ashat padian	Chhant	Shalok in Va:r	Paudis	Others
1	Siri Ra:g	33	17+1	-	7		Pehre=2
2	Ma:jh		1	-	46	Va:r=27	
3	Gaudi	20	18	3	-		-
4	A:ssa:	40	22	5	44	24	Patti=1
5	Gujri:	2	5	-	5	-	-
6	Vadhans	3	-	3	3	-	Alahunian=5
7	Sorthi	12	4	-	2	-	-
8	Dhanasri	8	2	3	-	-	-
9	Tilang	5	1	-	-	-	-
10	Su:hi:	9	5	5	21	-	Kuchaji:1 Suchaji:-1
11	Bila:wal	4	2	2	2	-	
12	Ra:mkali:	11	9		19		Ongka:r=54 SidhGoshti=73
13	Ma:ru:	12	11	-	18		Solhe-22
14	Tukha:ri	-	1	6	-	-	-
15	Bhairau	8	1	-	-	-	-
16	Basant	10	8	-	-	-	-
17	Sa:rang	3	2	-	33	-	-
18	Mala:r	9	5	-	24	27 in Va:r	-
19	Parbha:ti	17	7	-	-	-	-
20	Vadhi:k	-	-	-	32	-	-
	Total	206	121+1	27	256*	Va :r=3, (78)	159 =847+1

Each of his hymn is set to music appropriate to the content and spirit of song and succeeds eminently in creating an atmosphere of great saint poets. *Japuji: Sa:hib* and *Patti:* in *Ra:g A:ssa:*, *Ongka:r* and *Siddh Gosht* in *Ra:g Ramkli:*, *Ba:ra:hma:h* in *Ra:g Tukha:ri:*, *A:rti* in *Dhana:sri:*, *Va:ra:n* in *Ra:g Ma:jh, A:ssa:* and *Mala:r*. In addition, he used folk tunes in *Pad, shlok, sohle, astpadi:, chhand, thiti:, patti:, pahire, paudi: and alahuni: (Vadhans Ra:g)*. His hymns are in pure and mixed *Ra:gs* of *Sri Ra:g, Ma:jh Gaudi:, A:ssa:, Gujri:, Vadhans, Sorath, Dhana:sri:, Tilang, Su:hi:, Bila:wal, Ra:mkali, Ma:ru:, Tukha:ri:, Basant, Sa:rang, Mala:r and Parbha:ti*. *Mardana* provided company with music on *raba:b*.

In him we find a saint singing hymnal songs, a householder singing virtues of good life and painter creating wonderful pictures in music. In him, the ascetic and the aesthetic combine, again after centuries, to inspire the common man for self realization in the social order itself.<sup>6</sup>

Each classical *ra:g* has its own rationale and dialectics. It is set or written strictly in conformity with the nature of the delicate emotion or sentiment to be expressed. It has a locale in time and space, and it alone can render the nuances and nostalgia of the sentiment, the season and the hour. It has its own unique atmosphere or aura and its own peculiar poetic graces. Thus we have *Ra:g A:ssa:* or ‘the song of hope’ to be sung in the morning and the evening against the background of the winter. Similarly we have *Ra:g Wadhans* or ‘the song of the urge for the Lord’, *Ra:g Gauri:* or ‘the song of seriousness’, *Ra:g Sorath* or ‘the song of Darkness’, *Ra:g Dhana:sri:*, or ‘the song of separation’, *Ra:g Basant* or ‘the song of spring’ etc.<sup>7</sup>

In these *ra:gs* the high priests of spirituality and humanism sang out his gospel in all the metaphysical, social and personal aspects. The more profound of these *Bhairav, Hindol, Malkauns* and *Sri Ra:g* received greater attention and predominate. The form is made to agree with the content and both together agree with the particular music attached to the text. A characteristic example is that of *Ba:ra: Ma:h* in *Ra:g Tukha:ri:*. *Bara: Ma:h* or the song of the twelve months of the Indian local calendar of the time has traditionally described the longings and heart pangs of the separated lovers from month to month and season to season till the full round of a year is completed. The changing aspects of natural phenomenon take on the mood of the lovelorn lady who herself is correspondingly affected. Here the traditional form of *Ba:ra: Ma:ha:* is further reinforced by *Tukha:ri: Ra:g*, making it still more poignant and touching in its appeal.

The beloved is not back home,  
I pine and pine for want of him  
The lightening flashes heartless scares me stiff  
The bed lies bare and lonely  
The fact is that my sufferings are real  
O mother dear, the pain is going to kill me.

The music and the sentiment agree in all other cases. It is so in *A:ssa: Ra:g*. The particular music belongs to the serene early hours before day break and has something

earthly mixed with high heavens to offer. The mundane and celestial meet and the sentiment of wonder at the limitless vastness of creation is reinforced.

Nature is all that is visible, Nature is all that is audible.  
Nature is something love, the essence of happiness.  
Nature permeates abysmal depths, highest heaven  
Nature is all forms.

But not all his writings are composed in ra:gs. For Japji, no ra:g is prescribed. There are some more exceptions to the rule of music. He thereafter did not bind him self to the metre and measure but to the underlying thought process and the elaboration required for the masses in presence. He freely adopted folk poetical forms of Punjab, investing them with absolutely new content of his own<sup>8</sup>.

Music influences not only men but also beasts and trees. It has been said that poetry is music in words. Therefore in poetry, if it is to influence life, music is essential to prosody. This is in abundance in the poetry of Guru Nanak.

In Guru Nanak's poetry there is a rare celestial musical element. Its grandeur can be discerned in a simple stanza in Dhana;sri:, A:rti:, sabd 9:

ਸਹਸ ਤਵ ਨੈਨ ਨਨ ਨੈਨ ਹਹਿ ਤੋਹਿ ਕਉ ਸਹਸ ਮੂਰਤਿ ਨਨਾ ਏਕ ਤੋਹੀ ॥  
ਸਹਸ ਪਦ ਬਿਮਲ ਨਨ ਏਕ ਪਦ ਗੰਧ ਬਿਨੁ ਸਹਸ ਤਵ ਗੰਧ ਇਵ ਚਲਤ ਮੋਹੀ ॥ ੨ ॥  
ਸਭ ਮਹਿ ਜੋਤਿ ਜੋਤਿ ਹੈ ਸੋਇ ॥ ਤਿਸ ਦੈ ਚਾਨਣਿ ਸਭ ਮਹਿ ਚਾਨਣੁ ਹੋਇ ॥ (ਮ.੧, ਪੰਨਾ ੧੩)

Sahs tav nain, nan nain hai tohi kau  
Sahs mu:rti: nana: ek thi:  
Sahs pad bimal nan ek pad gandh bin  
Sahs tav gandh iv chalet mohi  
Sabh mai joti joti hai soi  
Tis de Cha:nan sabh mahi cha:nan hoi.

You have thousands of eyes, and yet You have no eyes. You have thousands of forms, and yet You do not have even one. You have thousands of Lotus Feet, and yet You do not have even one foot. You have no nose, but you have thousands of noses. This Play of Yours enchants me. Amongst all is the Light—You are that Light. By this Illumination, that Light is radiant within all. Through the Guru's Teachings, the Light shines forth.

Mardana with his instrument *Reba:b*. accompanied Guru Nanak throughout his journeys. Hence he was honoured as the companion and musician of Guru Nanak. There are 3 sloks of Mardana in Biha:gra di Va:r (page 553).

The pride of place of Guru Nanak in Sri Guru Granth Sahib is regularly maintained. All sections/chapters in Sri Guru Granth Sahib start with a specific verse/hymn from Guru Nanak's Japuji, popularly known as '*Mangal*'. These verses/hymns are as follows:



1. Ik Onkar Satguru Prasad - used 419 times.
2. Ik Onkar Satnam Guruprasad - used 2 times.
3. Ik Onkar Satnam Karta purkh Guruprasad - 9times.
4. Ik Onkar Satnam Karta Purkh Nirbhau Nirvair, Akal Murat, Aju:ni:, Saibhang Gurprasad -used 33 times.

Guru Nanak introduced very special terms in his hymns. The indication of the main Sur (tune) in the music arrangement in Sri *Guru Granth Sahib* is named as ‘Ghar’ (House), a terminology adopted by Guru Nanak. There is a reference of 1 to 17 ‘Ghars’ in *Guru Granth Sahib*. If there is no reference of the word ‘Ghar’, then that hymn should be sung in its pure form. Similarly, the Use of Word ‘Raha:o by Guru nanak has very special significance.

1. The word ‘Rahao’ is related to the *Ra:g* of the composition. The ‘Rahao’ refers to the ‘*Stha:i:*’ in a *Ra:g*.
2. It also underlines the basic idea in a hymn.
3. Where there are two ‘Rahaos’ in a hymn, the first poses a question and the second gives an answer.
4. Where there are three ‘Rahaos’ in a hymn, the first would be an inspiration, the second would refer to constraints and the third would be an advice. (see pages 154-55).
5. Where there are six ‘Rahaos’ in a hymn, it refers to the individual ‘*Stha:i:*’, in the *Ra:g*. (see pages 81-82).
6. The *Ba:ni:* which has not been written in *Ra:gs* has no ‘Rahao’ in it e.g., Japuji Sahib. Also Guru Nanak’s *ba:ni:* recorded after the *Ra:gs* (which finish at page 1353) includes *Slok Sahskriti Mehla 1* (page 1353), *Slok Va:ra:n te Vadhi:k* (pages 1410-1426)

The division of Guru Nanak’s poetry along the classical *ra:gs* appears at first sight somewhat arbitrary, for one finds certain sentiments and thoughts, as also their renderings, repeated in the verses belonging to different *ra:gs* or categories of music. However a careful analysis would show that the verse placed under a particular category is in strict accord with the spirit and the genius of the *ra:g* in question. The repetition alluded to above is inevitable to an extent because of an overlapping thematic and structural area of a few *ra:gs* in particular. It is remarkable how he employed the profane and erotic motifs of the *ra:gs* to achieve mystical breakthrough..<sup>9</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Kirpal Singh Dr. (Ed.) Miharban Wali Janam Sakhi, in Janamsakhi Prampra, Punjabi University Patiala, 1969, p. 137.

<sup>2</sup> Puran Singh Prof., The Book Of the Ten Masters, London, 1926, p.135

<sup>3</sup> Prabhakar Machwe, Dr., Guru Nanak as a Poet, The Sikh Review, Feb-Mar 1970, Guru Nanak Quincentenary Number Vol. III Vol XVIII, No. 197, 123

<sup>4</sup> Gurcharan Singh Dr., Guru Nanak’s Art of Poetry, The Sikh Review, Feb-Mar 1970, p.173

<sup>5</sup> Dharam Pal Ashta, Dr., The Poetry of Guru Nanak, The Sikh Review, p. 139

<sup>6</sup> Op.cit.

<sup>7</sup> Darshan Singh Maini Prof., Poetry of Prophetic Experience, The Sikh Review, Feb-Mar 1970, p.149

<sup>8</sup> Gurcharan Singh Dr., Guru Nanak’s Art of Poetry, The Sikh Review, Feb-Mar 1970, p.174

<sup>9</sup> Darshan Singh Maini Prof, Poetry of prophetic experience, The Sikh Review, Feb-Mar 1970, p.149