INTRODUCTION

The songs of the Hindu and Muslim saints (sants) that are translated in this volume are an integral part of Sikh piety and Scripture. The youngest religion of India had its inception with the teachings of Guru Nanak (1469–1539), in the Panjab.

In 1604–5, the fifth Sikh guru, Arjan Dev (1563–1606), gave the community its Scripture, The Adi Granth (The primal book), which was an anthology containing the standardized and codified songs (bani) of the four previous gurus (plus Guru Arjan Dev's own compositions), and the songs of fifteen pre-Nanak saints. Guru Arjan Dev sought to give his community a compilation that would rival The Rig Veda of the Hindus.[1]

Many of these saints flourished well before Guru Nanak, but their teachings expounded beliefs that were of paramount importance to Sikhism itself. Thus by apposing the saints with the songs of the gurus, Arjan placed the tenets of the new faith within a religious context that stretched back to the twelfth century, if not earlier. Consequently, Guru Arjan Dev not only enriched Sikh piety by historically contextualizing it, but more importantly he gave it a prehistory. Therefore, the fifteen saints are not merely an adjunct to The Adi Granth, nor are they marginal to the teachings of the gurus; rather they are the intertextual ground from which Sikh piety itself springs—for prehistory implies continuity. In brief, the words of the gurus complete the utterances of the various saints: the old flows into the new, and the new encompasses the old; both receive and perfect each other.

Radical Indian religiosity has always been liminal: it knows no boundaries; it questions everything; it freely appropriates names, concepts, and places them into new contexts; it forever ruptures texts—in order to disseminate the Word (shabad), which alone can house the Divine. It is within this liminality that Sikhism itself inscribes its mark by transplanting/translating previous methods of naming the Divine in northern India within the confines of its own creed. It is instructive to briefly examine the various tra-

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ditions from which Sikhism garners its own identity.

Chief among these traditions is santism,[2] which is a constitutive, polysemic approach to the Divine, where the One is seen in the many, and the many give way to the One. The saints of The Adi Granth are firmly rooted in this belief, and they deny all canonized versions of the Divine—for them anything visible and external can only be a manifestation—which by its very nature is merely a paraphrase, a metaphor for the Divine. Thus there is no need for ritual, idol-worship, scriptural authority, Brahminism, divine incarnations (sagun), or castes, since it is not through these that the Divine is realized. Rather the object of devotion for these saints is the Primal Essence, the Being of beings, the Godhead who is internal, without form, unchanging, without attributes (nirgun), unincarnated: "He is unseen / like fragrance in a flower"(Namdeva, *Raga Gujri* 2, p. 33). The externality of systems must give way to the internality of personal experience (parcha): God can only be experienced; He cannot be known through religious systems, rituals, or spiritual discipline.[3]

The process of apperceiving the Divine begins with the realization that since the Divine is diffused in all things, it is therefore present in each individual: "In all things / exists the Lord, / assuming countless shapes; / in each pore he plays and sports. . . . He is nearer than my hand" (Ravi Dass, *Raga Sorath* 1, p. 100).

This immediately accessible God, however, is also infinitely distant; He is Parbrahma (beyond Brahma), the God beyond all gods who sits in silence, the ground of all that is—yet distinct Himself: "Primal, / All-pervasive, / Unrivaled, / Unchanging, / First Mover, / Hoard of virtue. / All-powerful, / Beyond creation, / Incomprehensible, / Forever present" (Jayadeva, *Raga Gujri*, p. 132). All other gods are His creation, His shadow; the sant adores and loves not the shadow, but He who casts it. However, the Creator of many forms is Himself without form (rupa); He is all forms and none. Thus He can only be known through His Name (nam). The sant meditates upon, and loves, this Name.[4]

The experience of the Divine is brought home by the guru, the essential component in the salvific process of the individual soul. The guru is at the juncture of the crossing of the human and the Divine, at the articulation of the chiasmus where God and human beings intersect. It is there that the position of the guru is marked: "Man becomes god in an instant, / when the guru gives him wisdom" (Namdeva, *Raga Gaund* 3, p. 47).

This articulation is the confluence and the dehiscence of the Divine within humanity. Therefore, the guru is not only a teacher,

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but an accomplished person himself in that he has already acquired God and arrived at the perfected state (param pada) wherein he can merge with the Creator of all things. But while he is in the world, he is instrumental in helping others to achieve perfection.[5] His instruction (bani) and his grace (parshad) instill illumination whereby the ignorant soul discovers the Divine within itself. The site where this event occurs is within the human mind (often called the Tenth Door), where the growth, maturation, and dehiscence of the Divine takes place; and only the guru can mark this spot, the X, where the Divine can burst open like a mature pod and disseminate Itself. The guru is God's channel; God bestows on him his bani and parshad—and he bestows on others what he himself has received.

Housed within the bani is the Word (shabad)—the identity, the mark of God Himself. The Johannine principle of the logos is discernible here—the Word was (and is) God. The guru mediates the confluence of the soul with God. This union (vismad) produces supreme bliss (param-ananda), which is beyond the reach of language, just as the Word lies outside of all words, beyond language itself: "The tale cannot be told, / so why speak further? / You are what You are. / What metaphor / can I possibly use / to describe You?"(Ravi Dass, *Raga Bilaval* 1, p. 113).

The guru, then, is the pointer to the silent abode of God, which is the true destination of all souls: "What are the manifestations / of Dev's abode? / There, / resounds the Word unspoken. / There, / neither moon nor sun, / air nor water exist" (Beni, *Raga Ramkali*, p. 153).

Given this proximity of the Divine, there is no longer any real need for traditional methods of religiosity: Scriptures, idols, rituals, and castes are unimportant. With the negation of official Hindu practice, the traditional liturgical language, Sanskrit, is also abandoned in favor of the vernacular.[6] Further, the duties of house and home (grihasti) are expounded since renunciation of the world (sanyas) is deemed futile. The emphasis here is not on pursuing salvation in a solitary fashion, but rather to engage actively in the flow and flux of the world in order to help others gain salvation. Thus it is not surprising that the sants continued to practice their traditional occupations, while they propagated their beliefs: Sain remained a barber, Ravi Dass a cobbler, Namdeva a calico-printer, Dhanna a farmer.

Within Santism, another strand is discernible, namely, Nathism, or the creed of the Yogis who follow the teachings of Gorakh Datta (ca. twelfth century). Nathism expounded salvation

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through the rigors of Yoga and asceticism, along with various Tantric and Buddhist practices.[7] The Naths were adept at hatha-yoga; this allowed them to physically experience union (samadhi) with the Divine.[8] The Naths denied scriptural and religious authority and maintained that the Divine was in-dwelling. Once the union between the Divine and the soul took place, the Yogi became a man-god, who commanded supernatural powers and even had the gods at his beck and call. Although the sants themselves rejected the practice of Yoga as a spiritual vehicle, they nevertheless borrowed the Naths' vast Yogic grammar and vocabulary, in their efforts to describe the confluence of the Divine with the human. Thus it is that Yogic tropes are often deployed within the songs contained in The Adi Granth.

Sikhism certainly drew upon the attitudes and postulates of the sants, yet it is too easy to conclude from this context a similitude to preexisting structures—for prehistory cannot be history of the present. Thus claims that bind Sikhism to specific anterior systems and precepts must be carefully examined. It is of course certain that Santism greatly influenced Sikh doctrine; however it would be a mistake to therefore determine that Sikhism itself is systematized or clarified Santism.[9] But here let us briefly turn aside from the prehistory and examine the specific history of Sikhism, in order to fully comprehend the difference between these two systems of belief.

The development of Sikhism was the result of three particular stages that delimited the personality of the new faith.[10]

First, it was Guru Nanak who established the doctrinal, ethical, and structural ground. He stressed the unity that exists between one human being and another, and between a human being and the Divine. This unity was the source of all ethical conduct: by recognizing that the Divine was present in all, the individual accepted the equality of all. Thus pantheism was extended to include social responsibility. Guru Nanak put in place essential binaries that summarized his teachings as well as those of the sants before him. For example, his theology concedes that there is a perpetual coalescence of the Divine and the human, the guru and the disciple, past action (karma) and present status, society and piety, freedom and enslavement, transience (maya) and permanence, sound (nada) and nonsound (anahata), transmigration and salvation (moksha), worldly love (lobh) and devotion (bhakti), and physicality (kirat) and spirituality. The sum of these binaries is a harmony and balance of three things: good action, knowledge, and

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divine love. Good action improved the physical body (which was adjudged a holy temple wherein the Divine itself resided), and engendered charity. Knowledge purified the mind, for it was the sole human capability that allowed cognition of the in-dwelling God. And divine love elutriated the soul from the dross of the mundane and thereby kindled a yearning for God. On the structural level, Guru Nanak established a tripartite system of service that reflected this inner balance. First, there was the pangat or the langar, the communal kitchen where everyone worked and ate without discrimination. This dislodged caste barriers,[11] and freed the individual from received prejudices. Second, he founded the sangat (congregation) which participated in, and expounded, divine knowledge through the bani (the guru's word) and meditation. Third, he established the dharamsala (religious hall) which provided for the communal and spiritual needs of the new fellowship where the individual could actively participate in service to God and to humanity. At the same time, Guru Nanak counterchecked the authority of Hindu Scriptures, and in their place espoused the singing of hymns that he, or other sants, had composed.

The second stage is associated with Guru Arjan Dev in that he provided the Sikhs with their own Scripture in the body of The Adi Granth, which he ceremoniously installed in the Golden Temple (the *Harimandir*, "Temple of the Lord") at Amritsar. By way of this formality he made visible the veneration of the Word (shabad) as contained in the words of the gurus and sants (the bani). The Adi Granth also differentiated between the Sikhs and the Hindus (a distinction never previously established), thus engendering a stronger sense of community. At the same time, Guru Arjan instituted the practice of tithing (daswandh), the revenue from which he used to construct various buildings and shrines. He also became the first Sikh martyr, who was sentenced to a torturous execution by the emperor Jahangir in 1606 for his role in assisting the fleeing prince Khusrau.[12] Guru Arjan's execution shifted the focus from the pure pursuit of peace to self-preservation for the Sikhs. Therefore, Arjan's son, Har Gobind, who became the sixth guru, began to militarize the community—a strategy that would culminate in the work of Gobind Singh, the tenth and last Sikh guru.[13]

The final stage in Sikhism is associated with Guru Gobind Singh (1666–1708). It was he who created and defined the Khalsa (the pure), a sect of warrior-saints within the larger body of Sikhism, who pledged to protect the innocent, to fight injustice, to defend the weak, and to uphold truth and righteousness. This

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enmeshing of the sword with saintliness further served to distinguish the Sikhs from their Hindu compatriots. For most of his life, Guru Gobind Singh fought the oppression of the Mughal rulers; his own father Tegh Bahadur (1622–75), the ninth Sikh guru, was executed by the zealot emperor Aurangzeb.[14] During his struggles with the Mughal authorities, Gobind Singh lost his four sons and was hounded out of the Panjab.[15] He took up abode at Nander in Haiderabad; one year later, he was fatally stabbed by an Afghan retainer. Before he died, Gobind Singh proclaimed The Adi Granth as the living guru, thus bringing to an end the line of human gurus that had ruled the Sikh community from the time of Guru Nanak.[16]

It is this history of Sikhism that is apposed to its prehistory; upon comparison, the differences between the two are pronounced. Santism never rose beyond its spirit of protest. As a critique of official Hinduism it worked well; but as its replacement, Santism failed since it could not sufficiently separate itself from Hinduism. Sikhism, on the other hand, was never successfully assimilated, and remained a distinct system of belief: one that continually sought to segregate itself from other faiths and creeds. Thus Sikhism went beyond mere criticism—it offered an alternative. Consequently, prehistory was used as a critique of current religious systems and canons, while the work of the gurus itself provided a newer piety, a "better" way as it were: one that always sought to be practical and responsible, where an individual could be pious and could function effectively in the affairs of the world.

To say that Sikhism is systematized Santism is to allow similarities to determine identity, for definition is always and only about identity. However, we must allow for the play of difference. We must see the prehistory of Sikhism, as housed in the work of the pre-Nanak saints, as intertextual contexts embedded within the body of The Adi Granth. The hymns (bani) of the gurus merge and become separated from these intertextualities, and it is through these contexts that Sikhism arrives at a specificity, an identity. The Adi Granth is a polyvalent fabric and text(ure) that weaves the perceptions of many saints into one theology. The Adi Granth as Scripture can only determine itself because of, and through, other texts contained within it—for it is itself always an intertext.

In fact, the heuristic force being asserted in The Adi Granth is intertextuality; it is the very ground of the Scripture's prehistory. The Adi Granth is the primal book that paradoxically knows no beginning, middle, or end; each of its songs and hymns comes into being through, and because of, an interplay with prehistory: ". . . [a]

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text is a relational event, and not a substance to be analyzed."[17] The fabric has many threads, for no text is the absolute origin of another text, nor is one text the parent of all other texts. Thus Sikhism is not refashioned Santism, nor is it a harmonization of Hinduism and Islam. And we learn this fact from the faith's prehistory. Sikhism is an inscription of codependent relationships, each one presupposing and determining the other; and its Scripture houses the unending play and interplay of texts and intertexts: "Wave upon water, / water within wave: / The difference is only / in our speaking and hearing" (Namdeva, *Raga Sarang* 2, p. 75). The rhythm itself of interplay is endless; similarity cannot exist without difference: what is wave and what is water, though both contain a similitude to the other? Texts know no boundaries; they cross over; they interweave; the endless flux "within the . . . text should not be identified with an organic process of maturation or a hermeneutic process of deepening, but rather with a serial movement of dislocations, overlappings, and variations."[18] The Adi Granth presents us with a perpetual fable of words: they rise and pass; the text brings this rising and passing into being, and the book itself holds the texture, the weave of this primal play (lila)—mirrored so minutely in the interplay between the human and the Divine, between the Creator and His creation, between life and death. This dynamic the sants and the gurus understand well, for we too rise and pass—brought into being—and life itself holds the texture of our allotted span of years.

Our alignment, therefore, should not be to origins and originality, but the polysemic significations of intertextuality, which assures us that all writing is rewriting and reinscription; indeed writing is the perpetual play (lila) of difference, which points to the relativity of all that is—thus is water, wave, and wave, water. Intertextuality and interrelativity, therefore, constitute the Spielraum (lila) of the Divine: "If You are the lamp, / then I am the wick. / If You are the shrine, / then I am the pilgrim" (Ravi Dass, *Raga Sorath* 5, p. 103). Things come and go through the interplay of universal forces of life and death; nothing comes into being by its own self. Thus it is that writing (the lila of difference) is not only semiosis, but it is also kenosis—for it empties the self of itself—and this is moksha, salvation, the release of the self from the self: ". . . no one belongs to anyone: / like a tree is home to many birds" (Namdeva, *Raga Ramkali* 3, p. 53).

The force of intertextuality impels us to realize that origination is always codependent; nothing bears full autonomy. Even the

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omniscience and omnipotence of the Divine is marked thus: ". . . I am the Life of the world; / yet My slave is My life" (Namdeva, *Raga Sarang* 3, p. 75). In the theology of The Adi Granth, codependence and intertextuality, is everything: "The one thread strings / innumerable beads— . . . River and waves, / foam and bubbles / have all their being / within water itself. / This play of things / is the sport [lila] of Parbhama. / The One cannot be thought / different from the other" (Namdeva, *Raga Asa* 1, p. 29).

Prehistory is then intertext and context. And such is the relationship between the songs of the saints and the Sikh gurus in The Adi Granth, for prehistory provides a specific and specified ground upon which Sikh piety marks its being. Prehistory unwinds the constitutive threads, the semes, which Sikhism twines and weaves into a polysemic fabric all its own.

Concern for the prehistory of Sikh tenets, however, has antecedents earlier than Guru Arjan Dev.[19] When The Adi Granth was compiled, it served two purposes. First, it canonized the works of the previous four gurus. Second, it negated various spurious songs and proverbs attributed to past gurus by the factions hostile to Arjan's guruship.[20] The canonized version drew its structure from the collection put together by the third guru, Amar Dass (1479–1574) which appeared in two volumes. This collection, known as the *Goindval Pothis* (The Goindval books), consisted of the songs of Guru Nanak, Guru Angad (1504–53), and Guru Amar Dass. More importantly for us, the *Pothis* included the works of Kabir, Namdeva, Trilochan, Sain, Ravi Dass, and Jayadeva. Thus, a careful preservation of the prehistory of the new faith is already evident in the earliest attempts at canonization. Although it is difficult to say exactly when this apposition of the *Bani* of the saints and the gurus occurred, we can note that the songs of Guru Nanak show pronounced similarities with some songs of Kabir, Namdeva, Ravi Dass, and Sheikh Farid.

It can be said that Guru Arjan Dev expanded the process begun by Guru Amar Dass in that he collected the complete works of the previous four gurus, including the hymns of his father Guru Ram Dass (1534–81), then included his own, and expanded the number of saints to be included in his anthology, in order to show the diversity from which Sikhism drew its doctrine. Arjan arranged these songs according to thirty-one musical measures (ragas) which facilitated their performance; thus it is that devotional hymns are the key component in Sikh worship. Later, Guru Gobind Singh added the songs of his father, Guru Tegh Bahadur to the body of The Adi Granth.[21]

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As Scripture, The Adi Granth propounds ethical and spiritual precepts that can be summarized thus: the need to improve the human condition by inculcating responsibility for the individual within society—not apart from it, and the exigency of realizing that salvation is the loss of self through union with the Divine. In other words, the emphasis is on recognizing the inherent unity between humanity, society, and spirituality: all things participate in each other and in God. Thus the text is a trope for being and Being in The Adi Granth.

Structurally, The Adi Granth contains the following divisions: (1) Japji (a morning prayer by Guru Nanak); (2) Rahiras Sahib (an evening prayer in two ragas by Guru Nanak, Guru Ram Dass, and Guru Arjan Dev); (3) Sohila (a night prayer in four ragas by Guru Nanak, Guru Ram Dass, and Guru Arjan Dev); (4) Ragas (songs in thirty-one ragas by the gurus and saints); (5) Slokas and Swayyas (miscellaneous proverbs of the gurus and saints, along with paeans by court poets in the employ of various gurus); and (6) Ragamala (a metric list of ragas).

Given that the bulk of the songs of the saints is found in the Raga section of The Adi Granth, it is worthwhile to briefly examine the musical system deployed by Guru Arjan Dev as an organizational principle and structuring device in his anthology.

This classification by way of ragas is evident in other collections of Indian religious verse, such as Jayadeva's *Gita Govinda*. The tradition itself of combining music and religious verse goes back to *The Rig Veda* that exploits an elaborate scheme of meters and chant styles in order to organize the various hymns.[22] Here it is important to recall that Guru Arjan Dev is also assembling a new Veda for his community—one that does not praise the various gods, but rather the Supreme God who is the Creator of these gods. And here is a crucial point: Guru Arjan Dev is intentionally writing a Scripture and thereby rewriting Hinduism. Just as *The Rig Veda* has its ten mandalas, so The Adi Granth deploys thirty-one ragas. And it is within the notational cycle of these musical measures that the bulk of the teaching (bani) is contained: "The jewel-like *Ragas*, with their fairy wives and families, came to sing the *Shabad*" (Guru Amar Dass, *The Anand Sahib*).

Legend has it that when Guru Arjan Dev sat down to compose and compile The Adi Granth, by the waters of Ramsar (The pool of God), in Amritsar, all the ragas (which have long been personified in Indian tradition as men with wives [raginis] and sons [putras]) came to the guru and pleaded with him to set things in order, for

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their correct usage and performance was being neglected and their "families" were being garbled or forgotten. In acquiescence, the legend continues, Guru Arjan Dev instituted the ragas as essential components in his new *Granth*—thus marrying sacred word with music.

This legend leads us directly into the very heart of Indian aesthetics. A raga is a musical measure, a structure, which spawns and determines various tunes. Thus it is always greater than the sum of its part, for it is a syntagmatic arrangement that gives birth to various—and unending—paradigmatic performances. As a syntagma, a raga perpetually engenders interplay with its many paradigms. Therefore, it is not surprising that Guru Arjan Dev chooses the *raga* as a synthesizing device—since his *Granth* also unceasingly engages in interplay with various binaries, countless texts.

Raga literally means "color" and as such is associated with a particular emotion (rasa), a specific time of day or night, a season of the year. Upon performance, this "color," this range of associative properties, undulates through the audience, imbuing—staining—each listener.

According to Indian musical theory, the shape of music is marked by the chiasmus, the intersection of binaries, the interplay of opposites—in that each note carries within it both nada (sound) and anahat (sound that is yet to be struck; silence in fact). Here again, we are in the realm of the syntagmatic (anahat) and the paradigmatic (nada), for music, like The Adi Granth, is that place, that site, where silence and sound cross. Since silence is the sphere of the Divine and sound the realm of humanity, it can also be said that music marks the crossing, the play (lila), of the human and the Divine. In order to produce sound, there must first be the potential for that sound—a nothingness (sunya) that yields the ground, the vacuum, which sound can fill, just as humanity is the ground of the Divine, and vice versa, wherein each can gain its full potential. Thus the interplay continues: thing and no-thing, the visible and the invisible, human and God, nada and anahat—merge and blend into each other in order to produce that melic intertexuality which is the vocalized shape of a raga, which is the constituted form of The Adi Granth, which is the union of a soul and God.

Indian aesthetics recognizes ten emotions (rasas) that abound in literature, drama, dance, painting, and music: the erotic, the comic, the pathetic, the violent, the heroic, the horrific, the hateful, the wondrous, the devotional, and the tranquil. The dominant rasas of The Adi Granth, according to the thirty-one ragas, are the devo-

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tional and the erotic: the individual soul is the pining woman who yearns for union with her beloved (God); such emotion is the result of extreme devotion, since the soul does not abandon its beloved and seek fulfillment in other "lovers." The time of performance covers the entire twenty-four hours—thus devotion and desire are presented as immutable conditions of the human soul.

These two rasas find contiguity with the songs of the saints as well. They continually speak of the in-dwelling God who sets in motion the entire play (lila) of love. And here is the key to these songs that unlocks their "secret" wisdom: it is through love that the divine Beloved comes to dwell in each life-form; it is through love that the individual seeks Him out; it is through love that the soul surrenders to the World Soul, completely losing its identity, achieving full and everlasting union. And what is the nature of this love? It is "Like a lustful woman smitten by a stranger, / like the greedy forever craving money, / like a woman to a lecherous man" (Namdeva, *Raga Bhairo* 7, p. 63).

But this union of opposites (the human and the Divine) is also an act that transcends syntactic and linguistic classifications—because it is an event (*parcha*), outside language, fully free of delimitation—just as the Divine is alien to language altogether; and what it touches is itself transfigured, translated into the indescribable, into that primal state (*param-pada*) where words decay, and meaning itself slips outside of language: ". . . [He] cannot be described, / He is everywhere, in everything. / Just as a mute when he drinks the sweetest nectar / cannot describe what he is tasting" (Namdeva, *Raga Sorath* 2, p. 36).

What then is the realm of the Divine? According to these saints, it is precisely nothingness, silence (sunya); it is a void that cannot and will not be filled. Yet paradoxically—and the Divine is a paradox—this emptiness is a nothingness that is completely filled: a precise equilibrium of "out-flow" and "in-flow": "The one thread strings / innumerable beads" (Namdeva, *Raga Asa* 1, p. 29). It was emptiness first that filled itself in order to make itself manifest: "First God appeared. . . . From That into this" (Namdeva, *Raga Dhanashri* 4, p. 39). Within the paradox of opposites—"This (the Divine) and "that" (all creation)—lies the play of being: "The blossom vanishes / so that fruit may appear" (Ravi Dass, *Raga Bhairo*, p. 122).

The trope of disappearance that these saints so often use has certainly been effective as far as biographical details are concerned. What we know about the lives of these saints is at best superficial

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and legendary. But a linear historical record is not really the issue. What we have before us demonstrates perfectly the union with the Divine that was the chief end for these saints—it is the meeting of history with ahistory, where linearity is subsumed by circularity, where sound again becomes silence, and where the void empties so that it may be filled. This union is a transhistorical event, valid for all time. Therefore to demand historical precision from the lives of these saints, and from Indian hagiography in general, is to miss the subtlety of the tradition.

The lives of these saints depend not upon our knowledge of who they were, where they lived, and what kind of characters they had. Rather their lives are *exempla*, paradigmatic representations of the syntagmatic Divine, which intersects and crosses the flow of human birth. The saints as people show the strength of the whole, rather than the uniqueness of the individual member.[23]

Consequently, history in Indian hagiography is not factual accountability but a narrativization, a plethora of stories which, when gathered, constitute not a life but a construction of the lila between "this" and "that." In a fragment, Empedocles tells us, "They were before and will continue being as they now are, and, I think, endless time will never be void of these two."[24] For our purposes, we can construe "these two" as opposites that come into play: the Divine that lies buried deep within humanity, the paradox of the mutable and the immutable; or as Meister Eckhardt states: "It is not outside, it is within; wholly within."[25] Here we have ontological intertextuality itself: Being and beings must both intersect in order to exist—for there cannot be Silence without sound—"You and I, / I and You— / how are we different? / Only in the sense / that gold / differs from the bracelet, / and water / differs from the wave" (Ravi Dass, *Sri Raga*, p. 86).

Thus the Divine needs humanity to complete itself, and humanity needs the Divine to perfect itself. This codependence is the nub of the songs of the saints translated in this volume; their verses are descriptions of the drama of the soul: its divine origin, its exile in the world, its desire to return to its true source and counterpart, and its final union with God. Once this union takes place, the soul becomes God, each filling the void of the other, and deriving "a simple unity, without any mode, without time and space, without before or after, without desire or possession, without light or darkness . . . a perpetual now. . . "[26] This is the beginning and end of all things, the play of creation and destruction; into this sunya the yearning soul plunges and disappears into God: "There, /

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resounds the Word unspoken" (Beni, *Raga Ramkali*, p. 153).

Any attempt at translating songs from The Adi Granth certainly involves working not with one language, but several, along with dialectical differences. The languages used by the saints range from Sanskrit; regional Prakrits; western, eastern and southern Apabhramsa; and Sahaskrit. More particularly, we find santbhasha, Marathi, Old Hindi, central and Lehndi Panjabi, Sindhi, and Persian. There are also many dialects deployed, such as, Purbi, Marwari, Bangru, Dakhni, Malwai, and Avadhi. This richness points to the fact that translation is not done in a vacuum—there is no neutral way to translate because words trail with them their own universe comprised of cultural, religious, socioeconomic, and regional references. Consequently, one must translate not with a judgmental view, but with the perception that the task of the translator is to produce a target text that allows the force and play of the original to function within newer linguistic contexts. Translation provides a site where the reconciliation of languages can take place, where a dialogue of opposites, an enantiodromia, can be brought about. This trope for translation also describes the message of the saints: the marriage of opposites—source text and target text unite in order to form a third possibility that perpetually exists between the source text and all of its potential translations (the endless array of target texts). As a third text, these translations of the songs of the saints of The Adi Granth find a metonymic linkage with the entire agenda of the Sikh holy book, in that both seek to elaborate an ideal—the former literary and the latter spiritual. The meeting ground of the two is also a union—the confluence of "this" (the source text) and "that" (the target text)—a metaphor (Greek for translation) well-embedded in the songs of these saints.[27]

Some may deem these songs as hardly poetic. It is, however, important to note that we cannot impose a preconceived aesthetic upon these songs. If we do not find them "poetic," then we must really ask what it is that we mean by the "poetic" and what elements determine its existence within any body of work. Further, we must note that aside from their melic orientation as songs to be sung as hymns, the concern of these saints is not to engage in "poeticity" as such. Rather, their agenda is broader than mere aesthetic harmony—for they are propounding an urgent and serious doctrine—the salvation of the human soul. Thus to demand a conjectured aesthetic from these songs is to miss the point: these songs are doctrinal sermons, they are not pretty songs, and their message is carried with the force and solemnity of music, not for purposes of

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pleasure, but in order to teach the unyielding heart: "Do not touch the safflower, / O my dearest friend, / for soon it shall fade away" (Sheikh Farid, *Raga Suhi-Lalit*, p. 209). For these saints, aesthetic pleasures are fleeting; only pleasure in the Divine lasts an eternity.

Notes

1. The Adi Granth contains 5,867 songs, proverbs, and paeans authored by six gurus, fifteen saints, and twenty-one poets and bards employed by the gurus. *The Rig Veda* contains 1,023 hymns, composed by diverse singer-poets.

2. The sant (mendicant) tradition of northern India was never homogenous and tended to attract people from the lower castes. It was, however, united in its fervent opposition to Brahminism and to organized religion, both of which constructed their identity by exclusion of the other. See W. M. McLeod, *Sikhism* (New York: Penguin, 1998); and Sunita Puri, *Advent of Sikhism: A Socio-Political Perspective* (New Delhi, India: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt., 1993).

3. The sants especially criticized the traditional view that if one is to find God, one must abandon the world, retreat into a forest, become a hermit (sanyasi), and there meditate. The sants saw such discipline as useless and gave it the analogy of the musk deer that roams all over but does not know that the musk is inside its own navel. Austerities served no purpose, for the sants, other than to aggrandize the practitioner. See Kartar S. Duggal, *Philosophy and Faith of Sikhism* (Honesdale, PA: Himalayan Institute Press, 1988).

4. By nam Sikh theology means "universal consciousness." By meditating upon the nam, the individual contemplates the ground of all consciousness and thereby reaches the ideal state of personal awareness. This definition is similar to the Buddhist doctrine of nam; cf. nam-rupa that means the "self." See McLeod, *Historical Dictionary of Sikhism*. Historical Dictionary of Religions, Philosophies, and Movements, no. 5 (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 1995); and W. Owen and Piara Singh Sambhi, *A Popular Dictionary of Sikhism* (Lincolnwood, IL: NTC Publishing Group, 1997).

5. Cf. the Buddhist notion of the *boddhisatva*, that is, the perfected one who remains in the world as a helper. See Robert C. Lester, *Buddhism: The Path of Nirvana* (Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press, 1998).

6. By vernacular I mean santbhasha (also called sadhukhari or santboli), that is, "the language of holy men" that was the lingua franca of fakirs and mendicants in northern India. Its basis was the dialect of Hindi spoken around Delhi (khariboli), with dialectical influences from Avadhi, Rajasthani, Panjabi, Braj, Kosali, Bhojpuri, and even elements of Bengali.

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7. See Harjot Oberoi, *The Construction of Religious Boundaries: Culture, Identity and Diversity in the Sikh Tradition* (Clarendon; New York: Oxford University Press, 1997); and McLeod, *Guru Nanak and the Sikh Religion* (Clarendon; New York: Oxford University Press, 1996) for a discussion on Nathism. See also J. S. Hawley and M. Juergensmeyer, *Songs of the Saints of India* (Clarendon; New York: Oxford University Press, 1988). Tantricism focuses on the female creative energy of the god Shiva, namely Shakti, which is deemed the true animator. The union of Shiva and Shakti serves as an important metaphor for the sants in their own description of the merging of the soul with God. See Paul Edwards Muller-Ortego, *The Triadic Heart of Siva: Tantricism of Abhinavagupta in the Non-Dual Shaivism of Kashmir*. SUNY Series in the Shaiva Traditions of Kashmir (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989). See also Nikky-Guninder Kaur Singh, *The Feminine Principle in the Sikh Vision of the Transcendent*. Cambridge Studies in Religious Traditions, no. 3 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

8. Yoga (yoke) is spiritual and physical training, comprising eight stages: self-control; attentiveness; postures; breath, sense, and mind control; contemplation; and intense meditation. Hatha-yoga (yoga of force), which is also called kundalini-yoga (yoga of the spiral), is intensely physical and stresses breath control and certain postures of the body. See Ian Whichler, *The Integrity of the Yoga Darsana: A Reconsideration of Classical Yoga*. SUNY Series in Religious Studies (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998).

9. The chief proponent of this view is McLeod. See his *Evolution of the Sikh Community* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975); and *The Sikhs: History, Religion, and Society*. Lectures on the History of Religions, New Series, no. 14 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989).

10. See Khushwant Singh, *A History of the Sikhs*, vol. 1 (Delhi, India: Oxford University Press, 1977). McLeod (1975), pp. 1–19 disagrees with this classification and calls it an oversimplification, although unconvincingly.

11. The exigencies of caste maintained that food meant for the higher castes (Brahmins and warriors) would become impure and defile the eater if handled by a member of a lower caste; even if a shadow of a low-caste person fell on the food or on the cooking area, impurity was incurred. The elimination of such caste rules and practices was the impetus for the *langar*.

12. Prince Khusrau was the son of Jahangir and the grandson of Emperor Akbar. Akbar wanted his grandson to succeed to the throne, superseding his own son Jahangir. After Akbar's death, however, Jahangir took the throne, and Khusrau in a revolt claimed the Panjab and the area that is now Afghanistan as his territory. This led to much intrigue and

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strife, until Khusrau was forced to flee Delhi. As he rested in the Panjab, he met guru Arjan Dev at Taran-Taran and asked for the Guru's aid. Arjan showed him great deference and gave him a sum of money. The prince was heading for Kabul; however, before he could clear the Panjab he was captured by imperial forces and imprisoned in Delhi. He was treated kindly by his father. Later, he was killed by his brother who became the next emperor, Shah Jahan (the builder of the Taj Mahal). For his part in the Khusrau intrigue, Guru Arjan Dev was imprisoned and tortured to death. Jahangir mentions this episode in his autobiography. See Alexander Rogers, trans., Henry Beveridge, ed., *The Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri or Memoirs of Jahangir* (1909–14; rpt. New Delhi, India: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, 1978), pp. 72–73.

13. Tradition has it that Guru Arjan Dev commanded his son Har Gobind, from his prison cell at Lahore Fort, to take up the sword in self-defense. Accordingly, when he became the sixth guru, Har Gobind (1594–1644), organized a strong contingent of bodyguards, established a fort at Lohgarh, and sat in the Golden Temple like a king. He also wore two swords, signifying piri and miri, the spiritual and the regnal. See Khushwant Singh, *A History of the Sikhs*, vol. 1 (Delhi, India: Oxford University Press, 1977).

14. Guru Tegh Bahadur was beheaded at Delhi by the emperor Aurangzeb because the guru defended the rights of Kashmiri Hindus to retain their religion and not to convert to Islam, as the emperor demanded. See Harbans Singh, *Guru Tegh Bahadur* (New Delhi, India: Manohar Publishers & Distributors, 1994).

15. Two of Guru Gobind's sons were captured by the Mughals and bricked up alive at Sirhind; the two others died in battle at Chamkaur. After a series of disastrous clashes with the Mughal authorities, Gobind Singh left the Panjab disguised as a Muslim fakir. After the death of Emperor Aurangzeb, Gobind Singh became a friend of the next emperor, Bahadur Shah.

16. Gobind Singh took up residence at Nander by the banks of the Godavari River in Haiderabad in 1707. Here he often held disputes with various holy men. During one of these disputes, he made disrespectful remarks about Islam; one of his Afghan retainers, Gul Khan, was incensed and stabbed the guru two or three times with his dagger. Though severely wounded the guru did not die. The emperor Bahadur Shah sent Gobind Singh two bows as presents to commemorate his recovery. As the guru pulled back the bowstring of one of the bows, his wounds burst open, and he began to bleed heavily. This time, the bleeding could not be stopped. After suffering most of the night, Gobind died in the early hours of the morning, in 1708. A temple (Huzur Sahib) now marks the spot of his death at Nander; it was built by Maharaja Ranjit Singh in 1832.

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17. Harold Bloom, *Kabbalah and Criticism* (New York: Seabury Press, 1975), p. 106.

18. Roland Barthes, "From Work to Text," in *Textual Strategies: Perspectives in Post-Structuralist Criticism*, ed. J. V. Harari (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1979), p. 75.

19. See Gurinder Singh Mann, *The Goindval Pothis: The Earliest Extant Source of the Sikh Canon*. Harvard Oriental Series, vol. 51 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997; and McLeod, *Textual Sources for the Study of Sikhism*. Textual Sources for the Study of Religion (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990).

20. Guru Arjan Dev's father, Guru Ram Dass, passed over his two older sons and conferred guruship upon Arjan, his youngest son. Consequently, Arjan had to continually face opposition from his brothers. His eldest brother, Prithi Chand along with his son Manohar Dass Meharban, began to write spurious verses under the pseudonym "Nanak." (Each guru took the name "Nanak" upon assuming the spiritual seat.) These unauthorized verses caused great confusion, and there was a demand by the faithful to assemble an authentic collection of the hymns of the previous gurus and saints. Thus, Guru Arjan Dev's *Granth* served both a spiritual (in that it provided a canonized Scripture for the community) as well as a political (in that it authenticated and reified his guruship) need. See Kartar S. Duggal, *Sikh Gurus. Their Lives and Teachings* (New Delhi, India: UBS Publishers Distributors, 1993); and Hari Ram Gupta, *History of the Sikhs*, vol. 1, *The Sikh Gurus, 1469–1708* (New Delhi, India: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt., 1984).

21. Guru Gobind Singh's compositions are contained in the *Dasam Granth* (Book of the Tenth [Master]). Gobind Singh did not consider his writings important, calling them mere wordplay; therefore, he did not incorporate his work into the body of The Adi Granth. See Dalip Singh, *Guru Gobind Singh and Khalsa Discipline* (Amritsar, India: Singh Brothers, 1992); and Gopal Singh, *Thus Spake the Tenth Master* (Patiala, India: Punjabi University, 1978).

22. For Vedic meters see David Frawley, *Wisdom of the Ancient Seers: Mantras of the Rig Veda* (Salt Lake City, UT: Morson Publishing, 1993); and Barend A. Van Nooten and Gary B. Holland, *Rig Veda: A Metrically Restored Text with an Introduction and Notes*. Harvard Oriental Series, vol. 5 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994).

23. See Winand Callewaert and Rupert Snell, eds., *According to Tradition. Hagiographical Writing in India* (Wiesbaden, Germany: Harrassowitz, 1994).

24. Fragment 16 of Empedocles. My translation is based upon H. Diels, *Die Fragmente der Vorsokrater*, 3 vols., 6th ed.(Berlin: Weidmannsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1951).

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25. Franz Pfeiffer, *The Works of Meister Eckhardt* (Kila, MT: Kessinger Publishing, 1997), p. 8.

26. John Ruysbroeck, *The Adornment of the Spiritual Marriage*, trans. C. A. Wynschenk (New York: Dutton, 1916), 3:6.

27. For a further discussion on the target text see Nirmal Dass, *Rebuilding Babel: The Translations of W.H. Auden*, Approaches to Translation Studies, 10 (Amsterdam; Atlanta, GA: Editions Rodopi, 1992).

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