

Sangrand and Sikhi

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An increasing number of *gurdwara parbhandaks* and *sangats* celebrate the occasion of *sangrand*.¹ These celebrations take the form of regular *kirten*, *katha* and *Barah Maha* reading type *diwans*, implying that *sangrand* is a Sikhi related occasion. A number of justifications are put forth to prove that *sangrand* is indeed a Sikh function. This article examines these justifications with particular attention to the *Gurbanees* portions that purportedly discuss and hence dictate *sangrand* as a Sikh function.

Sangrand originates from the Sanskrit word *Sans-kranti* (literally: sun-dependent change or sun-related actions). The sun and moon has both been a regular feature of Indian spirituality from the Vedic times. There are gods that correspond to both planets (*Sus and Ruvo*) and many rituals such as baths, fasts, pilgrimages and distributions of charity are tied closely to the positions and movements of these two celestial bodies. The underlying principle of fixing rituals to days on the calendar is that certain days are auspicious, some are bad (therefore activity should be avoided on these days), and others – though inauspicious – can be salvaged by the interventions of spiritual persons or religious chants and rites to turn them into favorable days.

By operational definition, *sangrand* is the first day of the 12 months² that make up the Indian solar calendar. The full moon day on this calendar is called *puranmashi*, and the moonless night is called *masia*.

What is the position of *Gurbanees* and *Gurmat* on *sangrand* then? What is the practice of our *Gurdwaras* in relation to *sangrand* (and other moon and sun related occasions)? The objective of this article is to explore these questions.

First, the practice of our *Gurdwaras*. Three broad categories can be observed. The first category observes a *diwan* on every *sangrand*. The day is celebrated as an auspicious day. A *banees* titled *Barah-maha* (literally: Twelve

¹ Other similar functions include *Maasiya*, *Puranmashee*, *Lohree*, *Maghee*, *Rakhree*, *Shraad*, *Karva Chauth*, *Dushera* and *Diwali* etc. *Diwali* is discussed in a separate article that appeared in this publication. This article concentrates on *Sangrand*, but will touch briefly on these other functions.

² These are: *Chet*, *Vaisakh*, *Jeth*, *Haar*, *Sawan*, *Bhadon*, *Assu*, *Kathak*, *Magghar*, *Poh*, *Magh* and *Fagan*.

Months) is recited, the *kirtenias* sing *shabads* from this *banee* that “discuss the particular month”, and the *kathakar* (if any) proceeds to pick out one of the 14 paragraphs from *Barah Maha* that “talks about the particular month”, re-reads it, and proceeds to explain it to the *sangat*. The *ardasia* (*granthi*) says in the *ardas*, words to the effect that the *sangat* is gathered to celebrate the *sangrand* of (name of month), asks the Guru to bless the *sangat* and ensure that the rest of the month passes in happiness. Readers may be interested to note that the Harmandar Complex falls within this first category (done in one of the rooms in the complex).

The second category of *gurdwaras* doesn't have a *diwan* on every *sangrand*, but would read the *Barah Maha* on any of their regular Sunday *jor-melas*, if *sangrand* happens to coincide. The one particular paragraph that coincides with the month is repeated, and sometimes explained. A good number of smaller *gurdwaras* within and outside of India fall into this category.

The third category, believed to be a minority does not celebrate or commemorate *sangrand*. Their position is that Gurmat dictates that no day is good, bad, or worthy of celebration or condemnation **simply** because it coincides with the position of the Sun or the moon. Sikhs who support such a stand further accept that *Barah Maha* has nothing to do with *sangrand* either.

THE JUSTIFICATION. *Parbhandaks*, *sangats* and *parcharaks* who believe that *sangrand* should be celebrated as a Sikh function provide the following justifications:

- (i) **Historical:** *Sangrand* has been celebrated since the Vedic days. People always consulted their spiritual echelon on the beginning day of every month to ask for guidance. Sikhs during the days of the Gurus **continued** to do so. There has never been an injunction for the Sikhs to stop celebrating it.
- (ii) **Gurmat:** The Sikhs asked Guru Arjun Dev ji for advice on how to celebrate *sangrand*. The Guru proceeded to write the *Barah Maha* (*Majh Mahala* 5, GGS pg 133). He told the Sikhs to gather in the *Gurdwara* and read this *Banee* on every *sangrand*.
- (iii) **Gurbanee:** The *Barah Maha* has one paragraph devoted to each month. Each paragraph therefore is a call for Sikhs to celebrate *sangrand*. Each paragraph tells the Sikhs how to live the rest of the days of that particular month.

- (iv) **Logical:** Even IF celebrating *sangrand* is indeed un-*gurmat*, there is still a logic for the event: *sangrand* is just an occasion for *sangats* to meet and pray. It provides an added **excuse** to come to gurdwara. We don't have to celebrate *sangrand* as *sangrand*. After all, *kirten*, *katha*, reading *Barah Maha* and *ardas* is **all** that we do on *sangrand* day. What can be so un-*gurmat* about that?

The justification of those *gurdwaras* in category two above is usually as follows:

- (v) **Request by sangat.** The *sangat* wants the *parbhandaks* to instruct the *granthi* to read *Barah Maha* on the particular day IF *sangrand* happens to coincide with whatever normal function the *gurdwara* is celebrating. The *sangat* is *guru-roop* (literally form of the guru), hence its request cannot / should not be turned down.
- (vi) **Logic:** We are merely reading more *Banee* (*Barah Maha*). The more *Banee* we read, the better, isn't it?

Let us examine each of the six assertions above with a view of not only finding out if any make sense, but if these views are supported or critiqued by *Gurbanee* – in particular within *Barah Maha* itself.

Justifications (i) and (ii) are contradictory. If *Sikhi* was meant to **continue** following existing practices (of the vedic times), then why did the Sikhs have to go to Guru Arjun ask seek advise on *how* to celebrate *sangrand*? Why not just carry on celebrating the “existsing” practice? Besides if the “vedic times” is our basis, then there are a myriad of practices that have to be followed too. We should be throwing water at the sun too – another celebration from the ‘vedic times’.

Justification (ii) is not only based on our ignorance, it further makes out Guru Arjun to be ignorant. Guru Nanak had composed the *Barah Maha* (*Rag Tukhari* GGS page 1107). IF it is to be believed that Sikhs did pose the question of “how do we celebrate *sangrand*” and the Guru's response was “here, I have written *Barah Maha*, get together, read, sing, discuss it on every *sangrand*,” then this answer would have come from Guru Nanak himself. Surely, this would have been the way Guru Nanak himself celebrated *sangrand* (IF he celebrated it in the first place and IF *Barah Maha* was written for the purpose of **celebrating** *sangrand*) and such “celebration” would automatically have become Sikh practice. In fact IF *Barah Maha* was written for that purpose of celebrating

sangrand, Guru Nanak would have given such instruction upon composing *Barah Maha* **without** having the Sikhs ask him.

Accepting this *sakhi* regarding the 5th Guru telling the Sikhs “here, I have written the *Barah Maha*, get together and read it” is to suggest that Guru Arjun himself did *not* know that Guru Nanak had already composed the *Barah Maha* – a preposterous suggestion relating to a Guru, and regarding one who had compiled the Guru Granth Sahib (*Pothee Sahib*, then) which contained both Guru Nanak’s *Barah Maha* and his own).

Alternatively, if indeed, the Sikhs had come to Guru Arjun for advice on how to correctly celebrate *sangrand*, and indeed if he meant them to gather and read the *Barah Maha*, his reply would have been: “Guru Nanak has already written *Barah Maha*, all of you Sikhs should gather and read his *Banee*.” Alternatively his reply would have been: “but Guru Nanak has already told us how to celebrate *sangrand*,” or “but we already have an established Sikh practice of how to celebrate *sangrand* from Guru Nanak’s times that has carried on into Gurus’ Angad, Amardas, and Ramdas ji.” All or any of this replies could, however only have been possible IF the Gurus before him had sanctioned the celebration of *Sangrand*, and the reading of Guru Nanak’s *Barah Maha* had become the standard Sikh manner of celebrating *sangrand* through the periods of the 4 Gurus preceding Guru Arjun.

It is quite obvious hence, that the story of Sikhs going to Guru Arjun to ask “how to celebrate *Sangrand*” is such that cursory analysis renders its fictitious and exposes its pseudo nature.

So why don’t our *sangrandees* just change this story and say: the Sikhs went to Guru Nanak and asked for the proper way to celebrate *sangrand*. And that Guru Nanak replied: “celebrate it by getting together and read, sing and discuss my *Barah Maha*.” Changing the story solves the problem of not making Guru Arjun appear ignorant, but it still makes our *sangrand* celebrating folks appear dim-witted. Because when they read the *Barah Maha* on *sangrand* day, they read, sing and discuss Guru Arjun’s. If the order was given by Guru Nanak, it would have been to read Guru Nanak’s *Barah Maha*, not Guru Arjun’s.

There is no doubt that Guru Arjun knew that Guru Nanak had already composed the *Barah Maha*. IF indeed *Barah Maha* was written for the purpose of celebrating *sangrand*, would Guru Arjun compose a **second** *Barah Maha*, (thereby creating confusion amongst Sikhs) and then go ahead to say: “read my *Barah Maha* as part of your *sangrand* celebration.” IF Guru Nanak had given

instructions earlier on to read his *Barah Maha*, and Sikhs (for whatever reason) came back to Guru Arjun, would he have said “from now on, stop reading Guru Nanak’s *Barah Maha* on *sangrand* day, read mine, instead?” It is outrageous to accept that Guru Arjun would set about creating such confusion by issuing ridiculous instructions. IF he had, surely there would be two groups of *sangrad* celebrating Sikhs today – one reading Guru Nanak’s and the second Guru Arjun’s. There may even be a third group – reading both by justifying – the more banees the better ! So viewed **in the context of Barah Maha being sangrand related /connected**, Guru Arjun’s decision to compose a second *Barah Maha* is anything but wise. There cannot be two *banees* for one the one and same “occasion.”

IF however, *Barah Maha* is **not** written for the purpose of celebrating *sangrand*, has nothing to do with *sangrand*, and has **other** higher objectives and spiritual purposes, then the Guru or Gurus could compose two, three or even more *Barah Maha Banees*. Such multiple Banees with the same name become problematic **only** if they are tied to an occasion, a celebration on an event; because there can *only* be one *Banee* for one event. The very fact that there is a second *Barah Maha* by Guru Arjun is in itself clear indication that either *Barah Maha* is not tied to *sangrand* or any other event, occasion and celebration. In fact Sikhs need to appreciate that no *Banee* in the entire Guru Granth Sahib is tied to any particular event, occasion and celebration.

Before attempting to understand *Barah Maha* (both compositions) in its proper context, it is pertinent to look at three underlying Gurmat principles that will help us comprehend the issue. A Sikh needs to understand that the underlying principle of *sangrand* is simply that certain days – because of the day’s coincidence with the position of the sun (the beginning day of the month in this case) are more auspicious than others. Is there such a principle in *gurmat* and *gurbanee*? Second, what does *gurmat* say about tying/linking a particular *banee* to a certain event, occasion or celebration. Third, since *Barah Maha* is associated with “the correct way to celebrate *sangrand*” what do we make out of the notion of ‘celebrating correctly?’

THREE GURMAT PRINCIPLES WORTH KNOWING.

(a) Auspiciousness. The philosophy of *sangrand* is rooted in the *Bippar* principle that that certain days are auspicious and others are not. The latter require spiritual interventions to turn them into favorable days. *Sangrand*, being the beginning of the calendar month was set as the right time for lay people to go to their spiritual guides (the Brahmin priests) to (i) consult which days and time

were auspicious for their specific needs and (ii) get specific advice on what rituals (donations, fasts etc) to perform on the various days of the new month. For the priestly class *sangrand* served to provide a constant hold and sway on their followers. This was done through an intricate web of instructions valid for the next 30 days (with regular reminders on other occasions such as *Masia*, *Puranmashi* etc). *Sangrand* also served the purpose of providing the priestly classes their regular sustenance. This was done by requesting as donations, whatever material and service were required by the priests themselves for the next 30 days. *Sangrand* was thus declared doubly auspicious, worth of celebration by the performance of a variety of rituals under the supervision of the *bippar* priestly class.

Anyone with basic knowledge of Gurmat would know that such philosophy and principles have been critiqued and thus have no place in the daily life of a Sikh. GGS on page 318 has a verse in *Gauree Raag* composed by Guru Arjun:

*Nanak Soee Dinas Suhaavorhaa, Jit Prabh Aavai Chit. Jit Din Visrai Paarbarahm
Fit Bhalayree Rut*

O Nanak, that day is auspicious, when God comes to mind. Cursed is that day, no matter what the season, when the Supreme Lord God is forgotten.

In another verse (GGS Page 927 *Ramkali*) Guru Arjun makes the principle crystal clear:

Rutee Maah Moorat Gharaee Gun Uchrat Sobhaavant Jee-o.

Blessed and auspicious is that season, that month, that moment, that hour, when you chant the Lord's Glorious Praises.

The principle is clear. Days (or hours) are not auspicious or otherwise simply because they are named such or happen to be such or because they coincide with the positions of the sun, moon or other celestial bodies. The beginning of the month is no more or less auspicious than the second, third or 30th day. What makes the moment auspicious is **what** the Sikh does spiritually during that moment.

It follows therefore that *sangrand*, *massia*, *puranmashi* or Monday or Wednesday, or the 1st or the 31st has no meaning, significance or relevance to a Sikh simply on its own.

(b) Linking Banees with occasions. Sikhs need to appreciate that no *Banee* in the entire Guru Granth Sahib is tied to any particular event, occasion and celebration. This does not however mean that Sikhs have not (wrongly) tied *Banees* to occasions. *Ramkali Sadd* (GGS page 923) has been tied by some Sikhs to be read during the death ceremony. Some gurdwara *parbhandaks* and *granthis* recite it, arguing that this *banee* evokes **sad** emotions – hence meant for sad occasions. Reciting *Ramkali Sadd* has thus become a **ritual** related to death in some *gurdwaras*. Never mind that this *banee* is a critique of ritual and a clear call for a Sikh to rise above the sway of emotions. The *Gurmat* practice of reading the one and same *Anand Sahib* during *all* Sikh functions, irrespective of nature (death, birth, joy or otherwise), and the reciting of the same *Salok Mahala 9* during every *Bhog* ceremony (death / birth/joyous/otherwise) is indication of this *Gurmat* principle. The Sikh *Rehat Maryada* of *Anand Karaj* does require the singing of *Lavan*, but *Lavan* is not a *Banee* (as *Barah Maha*, *Ramkali Sadd*, *Sukhmani* or *Japji* is for instance). The *Lavan* consists of one single *shabad* with four parts (*Suhee* Fourth Guru, GGS pg 773). This *shabad* is not even titled as *Lavan* by the Guru. We have given it the title of *Lavan* (meaning circumambulation). Nothing should stop any Sikh from reading/singing this *shabad* at any occasion. On one occasion, I have witnessed this *Lavan* *shabad* turning out as the *Hukumnama* after the *Ardas* during a death ceremony. What better way for the Guru to instill the notion that the *Lavan shabad* is not reserved for *Anand Karaj*.

Linking *Barah Maha* to *sangrand* is therefore not in accordance with *Gurmat*. It is an afterthought. *Sangrand* (and a host of other vedic / bhramanical practices/occasions/events) has obviously been brought in as Sikh practice first and the effort to legitimize, justify, and obfuscate was undertaken much later.

It is fairly obvious that *sangrand* was smuggled into Sikh *gurdwaras* by certain elements (*mahants*, *derawads* and other deviants) whose only justification was that they owned / ran our *gurdwaras* and had possession of our *parchar* for over two centuries after the demise of the tenth Guru. The demand for justification came very much later, when thinking Sikhs started asking for it. The justifications were therefore cooked up by the beneficiary elements (modern day *sants*, *dera* fellows, *gurmat*- illiterate *parbhandaks* etc) who could not reach any higher than the standards of *hey diddle diddle*. They had no knowledge of Guru Nanak's *Barah Maha*, they had never read (let alone understood) either of the *Barah Maha*, had no interest in looking beyond the **title** of these two *banees*, could not be concerned with thinking through the logic of **two** *Barah Mahas*, or that the *banee* was a critique of everything that *sangrand* stood for, and had no knowledge whatsoever of the true principles of *Gurmat*.

All these *sangrandees* could do was to cook up *sakhis* of Sikhs going to Gurus, and the Gurus instructing the Sikhs to celebrate this occasion and whatever else that these *sants*, *mahants* and deviants had smuggled into our *gurdwaras*. Their *sakhis* are essentially “do as you are told, because the Guru told the Sikhs.” Knowing very well, perhaps, that Sikhs rarely make an effort to understand their treasure of *gurbanee*, these adulterators ventured to link some *banee* or other to their smuggled practices; never mind if the *banee* actually condemned that very practice. They linked *Gagan Mei Thal Rav Chand Deepak Baney* (Dhnasri Guru Nanak: GGS page 66) to their smuggled practice of *Aarti* in the *gurdwaras*. And they linked a *banee* titled Twelve Months to *sangrand*. The logic of their *sakhis* and their purported *banee* link was as bogus as the cow jumping over the moon and the spoon running away with the fiddle. It is such *hey didle didle* stuff on which the dubious *sangrand* is linked to the spiritually elevating and Godly throne aspiring *banees* called *Barah Maha*. That Sikhs have relegated one of these two jewel-*banees* (Guru Arjun’s composition) to ritualistic reading during *sangrand*, and the other (Guru Nanak’s) into absolute obscurity is perhaps the most profound tragedy that has fallen on the Sikh psyche in relation to his spiritual connection with *gurbanee*.

(c) Celebrating Correctly

These deviants who controlled our Gurdwaras for two centuries went a step further in wanting to authenticate all the rituals and activities that they smuggled into our *gurdwaras*. They hence came up with the fraudulent notion of “celebrating correctly” or “*gurmat* way to celebrate” ceremonies that had been **discarded in total** by our Gurus. How does one “celebrate correctly” some celebration that has been rejected in the first place? Within the benchmark of *hey didle diddle* the way to do it was fairly straightforward. All that was needed was a cooked up *sakhi* and a *banee* with a title or a few phrases that had some mention of the smuggled event. Not a difficult undertaking given that *sakhis* can be continuously modified to withstand whatever scrutiny that came afterwards, and given that Sikhs were generally loath to read, understand and get to the core messages of *banee*. The following personal narrative may help illustrate.

While taking issue on celebrating *sangrand* with a *dera*-trained *granthi* of a local *gurdwara*, I was given a new twist to the *sakhi* of Sikhs going to Guru Arjun on advice regarding how to celebrate *sangrand* correctly. This *granthi*’s take was that the Sikhs told Guru Arjun that Guru Nanak’s *Barah Maha* was too difficult and complex to read and understand. Guru Arjun hence wrote a simplified version, and from that point on, Guru Arjun’s simplified *Barah Maha* became standard fare during *sangrand* celebration. This was clearly a case of

modification of a dubious *sakhi* after specific defects were discovered in the original tale. More importantly, such modification laid bare the continued disregard for the Guru and the *banee*. To accept this embellished *sakhi* is to accept that by “agreeing to simplify” Guru Nanak’s *Banee*, Guru Arjun was implying that Guru Nanak had made a mistake of writing a complex *Barah Maha*, and that such **error** needed correcting. Looking at the amount of *Sanskrit* and *Prakrit* vocabulary that Guru Arjun used in his *Barah Maha*, the only conclusion one would arrive (IF one accepts this remixed *sakhi*) is that the fifth Master agreed that Guru Nanak’s *Barah Maha* was complex, and went ahead and wrote a second *Barah Maha* which was equally, if not more complex than the first. These *sangrandees* need to tell us why Guru Arjun’s so called simplified *Barah Maha* still has to be explained and interpreted by our *kathakars* at every *sangrand* para by para, *sangrand* after *sangrand*.

If there was a “correct” way to celebrate *sangrand*, then there must be a correct way to celebrate *puranmashi*, *massia*, *karva chauth*, *teerath*, *fasting*, *divali* and every thing else that belonged elsewhere. In this way, Sikhs could throw water at the sun too; albeit *correctly* by simultaneously reading out the *banee* that critiques/condemns this worthless ritual. The “correct way” for Sikhs to do idol worship may as well be to install the Guru’s idol in our *gurdwaras*, and worship it while reading, reciting, doing *kirten* and *katha* of Bhagat Kabir’s shabad *Patee Torey Malni, Patee Patee Jeo*. (GGS pg 479). That this *shabad* critiques idol worship is of no consequence. All that mattered was its reading would *gurmatize* idol worship. What depths of depravity must Sikhs descend to as a result of us not wanting to understand *gurbanee* before we realize we are being spiritually duped?

Sikhs must be aware that the terminology for Sikh spiritual celebrations is *gurpurab* (literally events relating to the Guru). Bhai Gurdas ji captures this spirit: *Qurbanee Thinaa Gursikha, Bhae Bhagat Gurpurab Karenday*. (I am a sacrifice to the Sikhs who in love and devotion celebrate *Gurpurabs*). This in line with the *gurmat* principle that a day is not celebrated or shunned simply because it is full moon, because there is an eclipse, because it is a Thursday, or because it is the first of the week, month or year. Such a principle is the crux of *Birpran Kee Reet*. The crux of *gurmat* is to celebrate events that **connect** to our Guru. Anything that connects to *Birpran Kee Reet* connects to *pakhand*. But all that connects to our Guru connects us to *sachkhand*.

UNDERSTANDING BARAH MAHA. As pointed out above, there are two *banees* with the title “Twelve Months” in the GGS. All 1430 pages of the GGS are in poetic form. The Gurus and *Bhagats* have displayed vast spiritual

creativity in their compositions, messages, illustrations, logic, arguments and reasoning. Such creativity is also amply illustrated in, among other things, the choice of titles and the resulting structures and frameworks of their compositions.

In *Rag Majh* there is a *banee* titled *Din Raen* (Literally: Day and Night) (GGS page 136 *Majh Mahala 5 Din Raen*). Similarly on page 344 of the GGS there is a *bane* titled *Var* (Literally: week). It has 8 paragraphs, for each beginning with the name of the day *Somvar* (Monday), *Mangalvar* (Tuesday), *Budhvaar* (Wednesday) etc. Is the latter *banee* **about** the particular days (Monday till Sunday)? The title certainly says so – it is about days. Using the logic of *sangrandees*, Sikhs should gather in the *gurdwaras* every week and read/discuss/sing this *banee*. And the *granthi* should re-read the paragraph that relates to that particular day – and do a *katha* on it. This would be “correct way” to practice the vedic tradition whereby people consulted their priest on what could or could not be done on particular days. Tuesday was reserved for the wrath of the gods. Thursday was unfit for washing one’s hair. Friday was for washing off sins by fasting. Saturday was for checking if the priest had enough butter on his plate. Sunday was for discovering if his bed sheet had worn out. By the same logic, then Sikhs should also gather at *gurdwaras* in the day and in the night and the *banee* titled *Din Raen* should be read/sung/interpreted.

The discerning *gurbanee* reader soon realizes that the *banee* titled *Din Raen* has nothing to do with day and night, the *banee* called *Var* has nothing to do with *Somvar* till *Shaneevaar*, and *Barah Maha* has nothing to do with twelve months. The messages of these *Banees* are spiritual, heavenly, Godly and elevating. The level of Godliness contained in the part of *Din* is the same as *Raen*. The spirit of heavenliness as contained in the paragraph on *Somvar* is the same as *Budhvar*. The spiritual elevation encapsulated in the paragraph of *Vaisakh* is the same as the one on *Maghar*, or *Chet* or *Fagan* or *Poh*. And above all, the underlying core message is that by themselves the day, the night, a Monday, a Wednesday, a *Mahgar*, a *Vaisakh* and a *Chet*, a January, an August and a December – are **all** one and the same. They are the same because the creator made them all. They are the same because it is we **mankind** who have given them *names* and *divisions*. It is mankind again that created “positions” for the sun and moon. It would be foolish to categorize our **own** divisions and positions as auspicious, as worthy of celebration or as good or bad. What matters is **what we do** to connect to the higher realms of spirituality and Godliness. The Gurus and *Bhagats* have used the names of days and months as poetic creativity to structure their compositions. *Chet* is the name of a month, but in the *Barah Maha* it is used to denote the linguistic definition of *Chet* (remembrance).

Chet Govind Aradheay, Hovey Anand Ghana (Barah Maha Guru Arjun)
Remember (*chet*) and contemplate (*aradheay*) on God and unlimited Joys will come.

Budvar is the name of a day, but Bhagat Kabir used it to denote the definition of *Budh* (intellect / thought faculty)

Budhvaar Budh Karey Pargas. Through your intellect, let the light of God illuminate your thought faculty)

The *sangrandee* will interpret the above two verses as follows: **In the month of Chet**, contemplate on God and unlimited joys will come. **On Wednesday**, let the light of God illuminate your intellect. Such interpretation is a mockery. What does one do on Monday? Darken one's intellect? What about the non-Chet months? No need for contemplation? Or no unlimited joy anymore? Why only in Chet month?

If the point that *Barah Maha Bane* is not about the 12 months, and *Vaar Bane* is not about the 7 days, and *Din Raen Bane* is not about day and night is still not clear, then the following may help.

Elsewhere in the GGS there is a *bane* titled *Pattee Likhee* (Literally: the written alphabet). It has one paragraph devoted to each of the 53 then prevailing alphabets. (Rag Asa M: 1 *Pattee Likhee* GGS page 433). On page 435 there is another *bane* by Guru Amardas with the same name (*Rag Asa M: 3 Pattee*). On page 250 there is a *bane* by Guru Arjun called *Bawan Akhree* (52 alphabets). On page 340 there is a *bane* by Bhagat Kabir by the same name (*Rag Gauri Purabi Bawan Akhree*). Applying the logic of the *sangrandees*, are we now to say that these *banes* are **about** alphabets, that certain alphabets are auspicious (for use in our names for instance), or that certain alphabets are bad, or that certain alphabets require the intervention of certain chants and rituals to make them good. The beauty of these *banes* lies in the Guru's and *Bhagat's* spiritual creativity. Such ingenuity is so amply illustrated that they are able to advocate a different facet of God and His wonder in each and every one of the 52 alphabets. In one sense therefore the underlying message is that all the 52 alphabets are the same because one can always find something spiritual in **each** of them and **all** of them.

By advocating that a *bane* titled Twelve Months is about celebrating *sangrand*, the *sangrandees* have undertaken a great leap of logic. Such logic results if one takes the title and **confers** a meaning to suit a distortion. The meaning of the title should be **inferred** from the essence of the *bane*. On page 917 of the GGS

we have a *banee* titled *Anand*. One could confer a distorted meaning to it by saying the *banee* was written for *King Anand*, or that it was written to express the Guru's joy after his *Anand* (wedding) or that it was meant for his son named *Anand*.. The true meaning of "Anand" as 'spiritual joy' can only be **inferred** from reading and understanding the 40 paragraphs of this *banee*. The inferred meaning of *Sukhmani* in terms of 'spiritual calm' comes from understanding the 24 *astpadees*. The conferred (distorted) meaning of *Sukhmani* is "giver of *sukh*." This meaning is distorted because in *gurmat* *sukh* and *dukh* are two sides of the same coin. GGS on page: 57 *Sukh Dukh Sam Kar Janeyeh*. In *Sukhmani : Sukh Dukh Sam Dhristeta*. (Sam means equivalent). The Guru could not be saying "*sukh* and *dukh* are the same, but then here is one *banee* (*Sukhmani*) that will bring you only *sukh*."

The meaning of the title "Twelve Months" has been conferred by *Sangrandees* as follows: "*sangrand* is to be celebrated by Sikhs as an auspicious day on which they need to gather at the *gurdwara* to get guidance on how to spend the 30 days of a particular month. Now consider this: the word *sangrand* does NOT appear even **once** in both *Barah Mahas*. It does not appear even once in the entire GGS. To talk about 12 Indian months and NOT mention *sangrand* at all is the strongest critique of *sangrand* and its philosophy. The **names** of the 12 months are deployed in poetic manner to cajole the Sikh to link to God The message: "link to God/remember Him/sing His praises " is the same for all the 12 "months." Under such circumstances, the **inferred** meaning of Twelve Months ought to be: **remember God irrespective of the month, day or hour**. Another inferred meaning is: the months may have different **names**, but that Guru's message is one and the same. In each and every one of these names lies a Godly message. Looked at from such perspective, *Barah Maha* is a *banee*, just like all other *banees*, for all occasions, NOT tied to any single day, and above all spiritually enlightening.

THE MESSAGE OF BARAH MAHA. Guru Arjun's compilation starts with the couplet:

*Kiret Karam Key Veecharay, Kar Kirpa Melo Raam. Chaar Kunt Deh Dis
Bhramay, Thuk Aiye Prabh Kee Dhamm.*

Guru Nanak's composition begins: *Tun Sun Kiret Karam Purab Kamaiya. Ser
Ser Sukh Suhama Deh So Tun Bhala.*

There is similarity in the words. The verses mean that I have been separated from you on account of my deeds/actions (*kiret karam*). [*Karam* means

labour.] I have looked for peace and solace everywhere (four directions and 10 continents), and come to you after being exhausted by this search.

Can this be the opening verse of any thing remotely connected to *sangrand*, let alone a call to celebrate that day? A *sangrandee* is expecting the Guru to tell him that his suffering is on account of the inauspicious month (and not his actions). He is further expecting the Guru to tell him what to do to turn the inauspicious into the auspicious, or at the very least when (what month, time, day) everything will suddenly become auspicious. But the Guru is telling him, auspiciousness has nothing to do with the time, day, and month. It has all to do with our *kiret karam*, meaning **actions**.

Now let us look at a sampling of the way in which the **names** of the Indian months are elevated to mean **more** than just the name of the so called month. The reference to the name of the month is in bold.

Month name	Barah Maha Verse	Inferred (correct) Meaning	Meaning conferred by <i>Sangrandees</i> (wrong translation)
Cheter	Chet Milaye So Prabhu	Remembrance allows one to meet with God	In the month of Chet , one meets God
Jeth	Har Jeth Rangeela Tis Dhanee	The Supreme and colorful Lord meets with the blessed	In the month of Jeth , I meet with my ...
Bhadon	Sey Bhadoen Narak Na Paeyey Rakhan Vala Het	Those who are protected from dualilty by the Saviour will be saved from hell	In the month of Bhadon , they will be saved from hell by the Saviour
Maghar	Manghar Prabh Aradhna Bahru Na Janmareah	The cycle of reincarnation has been broken by my effervescent remembrance of God	In the month of Maghar those who remember God will have their reincarnation cut
Fagun	Falgun Nit Salaheay Jis No Til Na Samaey	The fruit of virtue is daily praise and the absolute elimination of greed	In the month of Fagun praise Him daily ...

A few points to ponder: The Guru changes the names of some months. *Cheter* becomes *Chet*, *Bhadon* become *Bhadoey*, *Maghar* becomes *Manghar* and *Fagun* becomes *Falgun*. This is an indication that the Guru is not **solely** concerned with the **month**. If the month was of primary importance its name would not be altered. And if the objective of the verse or paragraph was to refer to the month, the month's name would not be altered. Why change the *name* of something if the intention is to refer to that something? But if the objective is to give the word spiritual meaning, it could be **changed** accordingly. Also look at the verse *Sawan Tina Suhagnee*. If "Sawan" was nothing more than the name of the month, this verse would have to read "*Sawan Tina Suhagana*." The names of the month is masculine. Also note that the Guru has placed the word "Har" before Jeth. This indicates that the word "Jeth" is being referred to as an attribute of God (Har) and not purely as the name of the month called *Jeth*. The word "Jeth" is used to refer to an elder relative within family relations. Here "Jeth" as an attribute of God means "Supreme." Of particular interest is *Bhadon's* transformation into *Bhadoey* (Bha-do-ey meaning two fears or duality). A second verse of the *Bhadon* para reads *Bhadon Bharam Bulaneay*. Here Guru ji is clearly indicating that *Bhadon* means *Bharam* which means duality). The word *Sey*, before *Bhadoey* refers to "those." So *Sey Bhadoey* means "those who have duality."

The concluding verse of Guru Arjun's *Barah Maha* is: *Maha Devas Moorat Bhalley, Jis Ko Nadar Karey. Nanak Mangey Daras Daan, Kirpa Karo Harey*. Auspicious are the months, days and moments for whosoever God casts His glance of grace. (*Nadar Karey*). Nanak seeks the blessings of your meeting; please shower Your mercy on me.

The concluding verse of Guru Nanak's *Barah Maha* is: *Bay Dus Mah Rutee Thitee Vaar Bhaley. Gharee Moorat Pal Sachey Aiye Sehej Milay*. The 12 months, the seasons, the weeks, the days, the hours, the minutes are all auspicious when the Lord comes and meets me with natural ease.

In between the opening verse and closing stanza, Gurus Nanak and Arjun deliver a spiritually elevating discourse on our actions, on separation, on His blessings, His grace, His vision, His mercy, on remembering Him, on searching Him and on meeting Him with natural ease. Indirectly every one of these discourses cuts through the underlying, obsolete and archaic philosophy of *sangrand* (and everything else connected to it) like a hot knife slicing butter. The beliefs of *sangrand* are pulverized to dust and grounded to ashes within the mind of the Sikh who cares to understand the messages of *Barah Maha*. The false but powerful hold of fake commanding priests who used the pretense of celestial bodies to mislead and misguide lay people are all shattered by the messages of

Barah Maha. In its place and within the Sikh mind, these two *banees* construct the purest and holiest of visions of the continuous grace and mercy of the Lord.

Yet if the *sangreandee* is bent on linking *Barah Maha* to *sangrand*, then the only link is that these two *banees* have with *sangrand* is that they provide a stinging critique of the philosophy of *sangrand*. Even then the critique is indirect, because both *Barah Mahas* make no mention of *sangrand*, the need for it, or for celebrating it. That is because neither of these *banees* is about *sangrand*.

THE REMAINING JUSTIFICATIONS. In the course of trying to educate the Sikh about *Barah Maha*, one faces weaker but no less erroneous justifications (mentioned as justification (iv), (v) and (vi) above. Brief responses to each are provided as closing statements of this article.

Sangrandees have argued that *sangrand* is just an occasion for *sangats* to meet and pray. It provides an added **excuse** to come to *gurdwara*. This argument obfuscates their choice. The following analogy will illustrate. Christmas day, simply because it is a holiday provides an added excuse for Sikhs to come to the *gurdwara* and do *kirten*, *katha*, *ardas* and *sewa*. No doubt about it. But if the *gurdwara* program (on Christmas day) went something like this: the reciting and singing of a specific *banee* or *shabad* that was said to be “connected to Christmas” or to the ideology of the occasion, a *katha* on Christmas, and an *ardas* for Christmas to bring joy - then the accurate explanation for such a practice would be that the **gurdwara was being used** as an excuse to celebrate Christmas. *Sangrandees* are thus guilty of using the *gurdwara* and *gurbanee* as an excuse to propagate, practice and instill the significance of a concept that has been absolutely discarded by our Gurus. They are seeking an excuse to celebrate *Sangrand*.

When *parbhandaks* and *granthis* are taken to task to explain their decision on *sangrand*, we are often told that they are acting on requests from the *sangat*. That the *sangat* is *guru roop* and therefore its request cannot be denied. What about those taking such *parbhandaks* to task – are they not the *sangat* as well? Such arguments are pathetic and reflect the pitiable state of our *gurdwara* leaders. Of what purpose are leaders if they have no spine to stand up for *gurmata* practices in the face of *Bipran Kee Reet* requests. The very least any *parbhandak* /*granthis* can do, if and when faced with such requests is to refer to the Sikh *Rehat Maryada* (SRM). The SRM advocates the celebration of *Gurpurabs* and four spiritual *sanskaars* (birth, *anand karaj*, death and *amarat sanskar*) in the *gurdwaras*.

All we need to ask is: Is *sangrand* a Gurpurab? Is *sangrand* any of the SRM mentioned Sikh *sanskaars*? The answer is clearly in the negative. But if our *parbhandakhs* still find it difficult to convey this fact to their *sangats*, then they may simply refer their *sangats* to the sub section on *Gurdwara*, page 12 para (h) of the SRM which advocates that non-Sikh celebrations should not be celebrated in the *gurdwaras*.

What is most detrimental about this particular *Bipren Kee Reet* called *sangrand* is that it is the point of conception of all that needs to be thrown out of the Sikh psyche. Bringing *sangrand* into our *gurdwaras* is the start of the slippery slope towards everything else that needs to be thrown out. *Sangrand* is the *Bipren* door, that once opened, will cause a tirade of wayward practices to tip-toe in, each at the heels of the other. And that is because everything else: *puranmashee*, *masia*, *lohree*, *karva chauth*, *maghi*, *rakhree*, *shraad* – the list is endless – is conceived of *sangrand* and all that *sangrand* stands for. Sikhs need to link with the **messages** of *Gurbanee* or risk being de-linked from the Guru forever. End.

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