

SOME TECHNICAL TERMS USED IN THE GURBANI

Through the letters, comes the Naam; through the letters, You are Praised.
Through the letters, comes spiritual wisdom, singing the Songs of Your Glory.
Through the letters, come the written and spoken words and hymns.....(sggs 4).



The Sikh Gurus wrote *Shabads* in poetical-metric forms. They were then associated with various *Raagas* and *Ghars* and many other terms such as *Partaal*, *Sudhang*, *Rahaaou*, *Pauree*, *Vaar*, *Ikpadaa*, *Dupadaa*, *Tipadaa*, *Chaarpage*, *Ashatpadee*, *Chhand*, *Ghorian* and *Alahunian* of folk music, types of *Kirtan* music, *Gaathaa*, *Funhe*, *Chaubole*, *Savayyas*, *Karhale*, *Solahe*, *Mahalaa*, *Pattee*, and so on. This Gurbani Reflection will attempt to have a brief discussion of these.

RAAGAS:

Raaga — combination of a set pattern of notes — is a condition of melody, which literally means to color or to please. Sri Guru Granth Sahib (SGGS) is arranged in chapters that bear names of musical *Raagas*, according to the nature of the composition, the musical clef (*Ghar*), etc. Each of the *Raagas* is unique. From a music standpoint, specifically the *Baanee* of the SGGS is arranged and indexed according to the prescribed *Raagas*, singing forms, music signs/ headings and the other guidelines noted in the *Baanee*. Popularly known as *Gurmat Sangeet*, such system of *Gur-Shabd Kirtan* instituted by the Sikh Gurus (initially established by Baabaa Nanak) is a unique musical tradition indeed, which creates original and specific musicology. The Gurus made the *Kirtan* an inseparable part of the Sikh way of life. The mixture of both the *Shabad* and the *Raagas* compliment each other in that the *Raaga* conveys a feeling and the *Shabad* a message. Thus combined together both produce very potent effect and impact on the human mind and heart, invoking spiritual sentiment, concentration, discipline, longing and love for God, etc. Thus the aim of the *Kirtan* is to experience the inner joy (Bliss) and *Sahaj* (one's natural state of Being). Therefore, the *Kirtan* is mentioned in the SGGS to be "the support of life", "remedy against evil", "source of virtues", "invaluable gem", "ocean of bliss", "divine nectar", "bestower of salvation", and so on. Sri Guru Arjan Dev Jee (who first compiled and installed the *Aadi Granth* at the Harmandir Sahib, was very fond of the *Kirtan* and the music) initiated the system of music sessions (*Chowkies*) at the Harmandir Sahib.

The entire *Baanee* of the SGGS has been classified under 31 main *Raagas*. They are as follows: *Sri*, *Maanjh*, *Gauree*, *Aasaa*, *Gujree*, *Devghandhaaree*, *Bihaagraa*, *Wadhans*, *Sorath*, *Dhanaasree*, *Jaitsree*, *Todee*, *Bairaaree*, *Tilang*, *Suhee*, *Bilaawal*, *Gaund*, *Raamkalee*, *Nat Naaraayan*, *Maalee Gauraa*, *Maaroo*, *Tukhaaree*, *Kedaaraa*, *Bhairav*, *Basant*, *Saarang*, *Malhaar*, *Kaanraa*, *Kalyaan*, *Parbhaatee*, and *Jaijawantee*.

Besides these 31 main *Raagas*, there are also variants of *Raagas* such as *Gauree Guaareree*, *Gauree Dakhanee*, *Gauree Chetee*, *Gauree Deepkee*, *Gauree Poobee*, *Gauree Maanjh*, *Gauree Poobee Deeplee*, *Gauree Sulakhane*, *Gauree Maalvaas*, *Gauree Maalaa*, *Gauree Bairaagan*, *Gauree Sorath*, *Wadhans Dakhanee*, *Tilang Kaafee*, *Suhee Kaafee*, *Suhee Lalit*, *Bilaaval Dakhanee*, *Bilaaval Gaund*, *Bilaaval Mangal*, *Raamkalee Dakhanee*, *Maroo Kafee*, *Maaroo*

Dakhane, Basant Hindol, Kalyaan Bhoopaalee, Praabhaatee Dakhane, and Praabhaatee Bibhaas.

Each *Raaga* offers a unique relationship to human moods and feelings. Another interesting aspect of *Raagas* is that there is a seasonal allocation as well as daily twenty-four hour time cycle allocation. For example, there are some morning *Raagas*, some evening *Raagas*, some afternoon *Raagas*, some night *Raagas*, and so on . Also, there are *Raagas* that are associated with seasons. For example, *Malhaar* and *Megha Raagas*, are sung in the rainy season, in the spring the *Basant Raaga*, etc. The reason is that human mind and heart undergo varying degrees of mood changes during a twenty-four hour time cycle as well as different seasons, therefore, certain *Raagas* are particularly suitable for certain time of the day and night as well as season. Dividing daily twenty-four hour timing cycle in eight *Pahars* and each *Pahar* in approximately three hour-period, the *Raagas* of each *Pahar* are as follows:

- 6 AM - 9AM: *Bilaaval, Devgandhaaree*
- 9 AM - 12 PM: *Saarang, Suhee, Bilaaval, Gujree, Goaud, Todee*
- 12 PM - 3 PM: *Wadhans, Maaroo, Dhanaasaree*
- 3 PM - 6 PM: *Maanjh, Gauree, Tilang, Tukharee*
- 6 PM - 9 PM: *Sri Raaga, Basant, Maalee Gauraa, Jaitsree, Kedaaraa, Kalyaan*
- 9 PM - 12 AM: *Bihaagra, Nat Naraayan, Sorath, Malhaar, Kaanraa, Jaijawantee*
- 12 AM - 3 AM: No *Raaga* specified in the SGGS. The reason could be that this is the time to sleep!
- 3AM - 6AM: *Aasaa, Raamkalee, Bhairav, Parbhaatee*

Unfortunately, *Kirtan* today has been commercialized to such an extent that most *Raagees* (*Kirtan* singers) are only focused and concerned with making quick money. This is commercialization and exploit of the faith. We all are to be blamed for this condition. Because, we do not perform *Kirtan* ourselves as envisioned by the fifth Guru, Sri Guru Arjan Dev Jee. Instead we hire the so called professionals to sing it for us. The results are in front of us.

Before Sri Guru Arjan Dev Jee started amateur class of *Kirtan* singers to perform *Kirtan*, professional singers (like nowadays) called "*Rabbaabees*" used to perform *Kirtan* for the *Sangat* (congregation) and the Guru. To cut the long story short, once these "*Rabbaabees*" went on strike, and thus denied to sing. It was that time Sri Guru Arjan Dev Jee started training the amateur class of *Raagees* to perform *Kirtan*. The sixth Guru (Sri Guru Hargobind Jee) started a new class of *Raagees* called "*Dhaadee*", who sang heroic deeds of old warriors. They thus inspired the Guru's soldiers. The name "*Dhaadee*" came from "*Dhad*", which is a relatively small handheld percussion drum.

GHAR:

It is a musical sign, used at the top of the *Shabad* in the SGGS. It gives a hint to *Raagees* as to what musical clef (beat) to sing the *Shabad* in. In other words, "*Ghar*" binds music and poetry in their metrical-form. There are up to seventeen "*Ghar*" mentioned in the SGGS. Musicologists have different interpretations of this term. But the consensus seems to be that it denotes the parts of a *Taal* (beat). Following is a list of seventeen *Taals* used in Indian Music with their respective

"Ghar". A close observation of the following list indicates that the majority of the modern *Raagees* generally seem to sing only in the first three or four.

- *GHAR 1 — Daadraa Taal* (There is 1 *Taalee** and the Beat has 6 *Maatraas***)
- *GHAR 2 — Roopak Taal* (There are 2 *Taalees* and the Beat has 7 *Maatraas*)
- *GHAR 3 — Teen Taal* (There 3 *Taalees* and the Beat has 16 *Maatraas*)
- *GHAR 4 — Chaar Taal* (There are 4 *Taalees* and the Beat has 12 *Maatraas*)
- *GHAR 5 — Panj Taal Swaaree* (There are 5 *Taalees* and the Beat has 15 *Maatraas*)
- *GHAR 6 — Khatt Taal* (There are 6 *Taalees* and the Beat has 18 *Maatraas*)
- *GHAR 7 — Matt (Ashit) Taal* (There are 7 *Taalees* and the Beat has 21 *Maatraas*)
- *GHAR 8 — Asht Mangal Taal* (There are 8 *Taalees* and the Beat has 22 *Maatraas*)
- *GHAR 9 — Mohinee Taal* (There are 9 *Taalees* and the Beat has 23 *Maatraas*)
- *GHAR 10 — Braham Taal* (There are 10 *Taalees* and the Beat has 28 *Maatraas*)
- *GHAR 11 — Rudra Taal* (There are 11 *Taalees* and the Beat has 32 *Maatraas*)
- *GHAR 12 — Vishnu Taal* (There are 12 *Taalees* and the Beat has 36 *Maatraas*)
- *GHAR 13 — Muchkund Taal* (There are 13 *Taalees* and the Beat has 34 *Maatraas*)
- *GHAR 14 — Mahashanee Taal* (There are 14 *Taalees* and the Beat has 42 *Maatraas*)
- *GHAR 15 — Mishr Baran Taal* (There are 15 *Taalees* and the Beat has 47 *Maatraas*)
- *GHAR 16 — Kul Taal* (There are 16 *Taalees* and the Beat has 42 *Maatraas*)
- *GHAR 17 — Characharee Taal* (There are 17 *Taalees* and the Beat has 40 *Maatraas*)

* *Taalee* is the pattern of clapping. *Taals* are typified by a particular pattern and number of claps.

** *Maatraa* is the beat, which may be subdivided if required.

There are many other *Taals* that may or may not have the same number of *Taalees* and/or *Maatraas*. For example *Punajabi Taal*, *Chhotee Teen Taal*, and *Thumri* all have the same number of *Taalees* and *Maatraas* as the *Teen Taal*. Both the *Jhap Taal* and *Sool Phaak Taal* have 3 *Taalees* as in *Teen Taal* but only 10 *Maatraas*. Both *Dhamar Taal* and *Chnachal Taal* have 3 *Taalees* as in *Teen Taal* but have only 14 *Maatras*. *Ik Taal* has 4 *Taalees* and 12 *Maatraas* as in *Chaar Taal*. *Aadaa Chautaalaa*, *Bhaan Matee Taal* (*Chaar Taal Dee Savaaree*), *Jagg Paal Taal*, and *Jai Taal* all have 4 *Taalees* as in *Chaar Taal* but not the same *Maatraas* (14, 11, 11 and 13, respectively). *Sikhar Taal* has 3 *Taalees* as in *Teen Taal* but 17 *Maatraas*. *Talwaaraa Taal* has 2 *Taalees* as in *Roopak Taal*, but 8 *Maatraas*. *Indra Taal* has 6 *Taalees* as in *Khatt Taal*, but 19 *Maatraas*. *Deep Chandee* or *Chaachar Taal* and *Jhumraa Taal* have 3 *Taalees* as in *Teen Taal*, but 14 *Maatraas*, and so on. Evidently the Indian music has developed and expanded in such a disciplined way that it has *Taals* of a just a few *Maatraas* to many *Maatraas*.

Not only music, *Taal* also pervades every movement of the entire Creation. Days, nights, weeks, months, years, seasons, movement of the planets in orbits, constant spinning of electrons around the center of the atom (called the nucleus where the protons and neutrons are located) etc. are a few reminders.

VAAR AND DHUNI :

There are 22 *Vaaras* included in the SGGS, 9 of them come with distinctive assigned traditional folk musical tunes (*Dhuni*) of their own as noted below. Thus, they have a simple rhythm or a pattern of a folk *Taal* (beat) with a wider simple and emotional appeal. *Vaars* are not assigned with any particular "*Ghar*" notation. They are accompanied by "*Slokas*" and "*Paurees*", and the essence of the *Vaar* lies in the "*Pauree*". They are generally intended to produce martial feelings.

- *Maanjh Kee Vaar Mahala 1 — Malak Mureed Tathaa Chandharaa Soheaaa kee Dhuni* (sggs 137).
- *Gauree Kee Vaar Mahala 4 — Raai Kamaaldee Mojdee Kee Dhuni* (sggs 318).
- *Aasaa Dee Vaar Mahala 1 — Tunde Asraaje Kee Dhuni* (sggs 462).
- *Gujree Kee Vaar Mahala 3 — Sikandar Biraahim Kee Kee Dhuni* (sggs 508).
- *Wadhans Kee Vaar Mahala 5 — Lalaan Bahreemaa Kee Dhuni* (sggs 585).
- *Raamkalee Kee Vaar Mahala 3 — Jodhe Veere Poorvaanee Kee Dhuni* (sggs 947).
- *Saarang Kee Vaar Mahala 5 — Raai Mahame Hasane Kee Dhuni* (sggs 1237).
- *Mala Kee Vaar Mahala 1 — Raanai Kailaas Tathaa Maalde Kee Dhuni* (sggs 1278).
- *Kaanare Kee Vaar Mahala 5 — Moose Kee Dhuni* (sggs 1312).

Vaars are to be sung in appropriate *Raaga* and *Dhuni* indicated in the SGGS. For example, *Maanjh Kee Vaar* is to be sung in *Raaga Maanjh* accompanied by the *Taala* of "*Malak Mureed Tathaa Chandharaa Soheaaa kee Dhuni*". Unfortunately the art of traditional *Dhunis* mentioned in the SGGS appears to be dying out, and needs to be preserved by training youngsters.

GHORIAN, ALAHUNIAN AND KARHALE:

In addition to the classical music, the folk music (because of its wide appeal) is also given importance in the SGGS. In this regard, in addition to the *Vaars* listed above, there are some *Shabads* about the "*Ghorian*" and "*Alahunian*" etc. "*Ghorian*" *Shabads* are on marriage and other festive occasions. "*Alahunian*" *Shabads* are on death.

Karhale is a type of the "*Chhand*". It also denotes a type of folk music the camel riders sing while traveling. The Gurbani has repeatedly compares our wandering minds with the camel as well. For example, see SGGS pages 234-235.

PARTAAL:

This is also a musical sign for the *Ragees*. *Partaal* means there are different *Taals* (beat) for the parts of the *Shabad*. In other words, *Partaal* means the parts of the *Shabad* should be sung in different *Taalas* and tempo. In the SGGS, there are 49 *Shabads* in *Partaal* set to different "*Ghar*".

SUDHANG:

This is also a musical sign for the *Ragees*. This term appears once in the SGGS (page 369, *Aasaa Raaga*). Essentially it conveys direction to *Ragees* to sing the *Shabad* in its pure form. For example, when the *Shabad* is in *Aasaa Raaga*, then it must be sung in that *Raaga* (and *Ghar*).

RAHAOU:

The word "*Rahaou*" marks "pause", and denotes main theme line. In other words, the verse of "*Rahaou*" contains the basis, essence or central thought of the *Shabad*. Whilst, the remaining lines of the *Shabad* are considered an exposition of the verse of "*Rahaou*". That's why *Raagees* use it as "*Asthaaee*" (first or the main part of the music composition) and thereby sing it repeatedly. In some *Shabads*, there are more than one "*Rahaou*", such as *Rahaaou 1, Rahaaou 2, Rahaaou 3, Rahaaou 4*, etc.(for example, see Pages 26-26, 154, 96-97, 899 of the SGGS). This indicates introduction of a new thought. There is no "*Rahaou*" in the "*Slokas*". In regard to the *Vaars* of Bhai Gurdaas Jee, the last line of the "*Pauree*" is considered to contain the main thought.

IKPADAA, DUPADAA, TIPADAA, CHAARPADE, CHHAND, CH HAKAA, ASHATPADEE, SAVAYYAS:

As the name implies, "*Ikpadaa*" denotes the *Shabads* of one verse. When "*Ikpadaa*" *shabads* have two verses, they are sung as one verse. "*Dupadaa*" are the *Shabads* that contain, besides the *Rahaou* lines, two stanzas. "*Tipadaa*" are the *Shabads* of three stanzas. Similarly, the "*Chaupade*" are the *Shabads* of four verses, "*Chhands*" are the *Shabads* of six lines, and "*Ashatpadee*" are the *Shabads* of eight verses. "*Chhhakaa*" is of six *Padaas*. Someplaces both "*Chaupade Dupade*" appear together (for example, see SGGS page 185). It means that particular *Shabad* contains "*Chaupade*" following "*Dupade*". The "*Savayyas*" are the compositions of praise.

SALOKA:

A form of verse or stanza, generally a two-liner form allowing a variety of metrical arrangement.

PAUREE:

"*Paurees*" are a form of stanzas. They also contain the essence of the *Vaars*. Literally meaning ladder or rung, it is a form of stanza adopted for *Vaars*. They generally consist of 6 to 8 lines each. Stanzas of Baabaa Nanak's *Japuji* are also traditionally called *Paurees*. Traditionally, *Raagees* are supposed to conclude Kirtan with singing of a "*Pauree*" from *Raagas Bilaaval, Kaanraa* etc.

GAATHAA, FUNHE, AND CHAUBOLE:

Funhe is a form of the *Chhand* (for example, see SGGS page 1361). *Chaubole* is also a form of the *Chhand* (for example, see SGGS page 1363 where it has 11 verses). *Gaathaa* denotes composition in an ancient language (mixture of *Sanskrit, Paalee* and other languages). Many Buddhist scriptures are written in this language (for example, see page 1360 of SGGS).

SOLAHE:

"*Solahe*" is the *Shabad* containing generally sixteen stanzas (for example, see SGGS page 1021). They are only found in *Raaga Maaroo*. There is no "*Rahaaou*" in them. Also, they follow "*Ashatpadees*".

MAHALAA:

Initially called *Adi Granth*, the contents of the SGGS (1,430 pages) contains *Baanee* of the Gurus (Guru Nanak Dev, Guru Angad Dev, Guru Amar Das, Guru Ram Das, Guru Arjan Dev, Guru Tegh Bahadur, and one Sloka of Guru Gobind Singh Jee), and *Hindu* saints (*Brahmans* and *Soodras*) and Muslim Sufis. These 15 saints were Kabeer, Nam Dev, Ravidas, Sheikh Farid, Trilochan, Dhanna, Beni, Bhikan, Sur Daas, Parmanand, Pipa, Ramanand, Sadhana and Sain. It also contains the hymns of eleven *Bhattas* and Bards, they were Mathuraa, Jalap, Harbans, Talya, Salya, Bhal, Kulh Sahar, Nal, Kirat, Sadrang and Gayand. In addition, it also consists of the hymns of Mardaanaa (the minstrel of Baabaa Nanak), *Raamkalee Sad* by Sunder , and *Vaar* of Sattaa and Balwand.

The word "*Mahalaa*" at the top of the *Shabad* identifies which Guru is the author. For example, "*Mahalaa 1*" identifies the first Guru, "*Mahalaa 2*" identifies the second Guru, "*Mahalaa 3*" identifies the third Guru, "*Mahalaa 4*" identifies the fourth Guru, "*Mahalaa 5*" identifies the fifth Guru, "*Mahalaa 9*" identifies the ninth Guru. This notation appears with the *Baanee* of the first five Gurus and the ninth Guru only.

PATTEE:

Literally "*Pattee*" means a writing board, slate or notebook (*Fattee*). When it appears at the top of the *Shabad*, it's also used to impart the Divine Teachings in the order of *Varanmaalaa* (alphabet), for example see page 432 of the SGGS.

— T. Singh