

FARIDKOT WALA TIKĀ

Farīdkoṭ ṭikā, the earliest full-scale exegesis or annotated version of the Gurū Granth Sāhib, was prepared under the patronage of the princely rulers of the state of Farīdkoṭ. Its popular name is *Farīdkoṭ wālā ṭikā* or, for short, *Farīdkoṭ ṭikā*. Its full title is *Ādi Srī Gurū Granth Sāhib Jī Saṭik*. Saṭik literary means *with ṭikā*, annotation or commentary. The language used is, by and large, Punjabi or Hindi, not difficult to understand. Yet, because of its poetic form and philosophical content and the linguistic peculiarities bequeathed it by a long range of time and space it spanned, the Scriptural text transmitted to the laity required to be annotated and explained. In consequence arose a whole body of exegetical literature; also several schools of interpretation.

a) The starting point is the corpus itself. Successive Gurūs clarified, elaborated and expounded in their own verse the meaning of the compositions they had inherited.

b) The Janam Sākhīs contain these interpretations clothed in much hagiographical detail. This is especially so in the case of the writers attempting to provide a setting and background to the hymns they are expounding. One prominent example is the Poṭhī by Bābā Miharbān. The writings of Bhāi Gurdas (d.1636) are placed by some in the same category.

c) During the 18th century and up into the 19th the task of interpreting and preaching the Holy Writ primarily rested with the Udāsī and Nirmalā schoolmen who were in control of the Sikh shrines and remained unmolested

in the days of persecution. The commentaries given were mainly oral. The first Udāsī exegete who left a written record was Ānandghana, who completed his *ṭikā* of Japu Ji in 1795. The most prominent of the Nirmalās, Bhai Santokh Singh did *Garabgañjanī ṭikā* (*ṭikā* to humble the *garab*, i.e. pride, of Ānandghana) in criticism of Ānandghana's interpretations in his Japu *ṭikā*. Both Udāsī and Nirmalā interpretation were saturated with Upanishadic lore and were densely Vedantic.

d) A new phase of exegetical writings began with the advent of Western learning. Following the publication of Ernest Trumpp's unfinished translation in 1877 Raja Bikram Singh, ruler of Farīdkoṭ and patron of Amritsar Khalsa Diwan, commissioned a full scale commentary in Punjabi on Gurū Granth Sāhib. The first draft was ready in 1883 and was revised by a synod of Sikh scholars representing a wide variety of schools of Sikh thought. The four volumes were printed in the beginning of the 20th century. A large number of sets had been presented to gurdwaras and to scholars. The rest were sold at nominal price. Under the pressure of various Singh Sabhas and Khalsa Diwans Maharaja Briginder Singh ordered a revised edition in Standard Punjabi instead of that in Braj in 1918. His successor insisted to preserve the Tika as it is.

