

Sohila Further Reading – Encyclopedia Entries

Bhai Kahan Singh Nabha, *Mahan Kosh*

ਸੋਹਿਲੜਾ, ਸੋਹਿਲਾ; ਸੰਗ੍ਰਾ- ਆਨੰਦ ਦਾ ਗੀਤ. ਸ਼ੋਭਨ ਸਮੇਂ ਵਿੱਚ ਗਾਇਆ ਗੀਤ. “ਮੰਗਲ ਗਾਵਹੁ ਤਾ ਪ੍ਰਭੂ ਭਾਵਹੁ ਸੋਹਿਲੜਾ ਜੁਗ ਚਾਰੇ.” (ਸੁਗੀ ਛੰਤ ਮ: ੧) “ਕਹੈ ਨਾਨਕ ਸਬਦ ਸੋਹਿਲਾ ਸਤਿਗੁਰੂ ਸੁਣਾਇਆ.” (ਅੰਨਦੁ) ੨. ਸੁ (ਉੱਤਮ) ਹੇਲਾ (ਖੇਲ) ਹੈ ਜਿਸ ਵਿੱਚ ਅਜੇਹਾ ਕਾਵ੍ਰ। ੩. ਸ੍ਰੀ ਗੁਰੂ ਗ੍ਰੰਥ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਵਿੱਚ “ਸੋਹਿਲਾ” ਸਿਰਲੇਖ ਹੇਠ ਇੱਕ ਖਾਸ ਬਾਣੀ, ਜਿਸ ਦਾ ਪ੍ਰਭਾ ਸੌਣ ਵੇਲੇ ਵਿਧਾਨ ਹੈ. “ਤਿਤੁ ਘਰਿ ਗਾਵਹੁ ਸੋਹਿਲਾ”- ਪਾਠ ਹੋਣ ਕਰਕੇ ਇਹ ਸੰਗ੍ਰਾ ਹੋਈ ਹੈ.

W.H. McLeod, *Historical Dictionary of Sikhism*

SOHILA or KIRTAN SOHILA.

The five hymns which are sung or chanted by devout Sikhs prior to retiring at night. The hymns are recorded at the end of the liturgical portion of the *Adi Granth*, pp. 12-13 (q.v.) and again under their appropriate rags (q.v.). The order is also sung at the conclusion of a Sikh cremation.

Harbans Singh, *The Encyclopedia of Sikhism*

SOHILĀ or KĪRTAN SOHILĀ is, in sequence, the fourth *bāṇī* or composition entered in the *Gurū Granth Sāhib*. *Sohilā* is the caption given in the scripture, though it is popularly known as *Kīrtan Sohilā*, and is also sometimes so captioned in the *gutkās* or breviaries. The *Sohilā* comprises five hymns-- first three contributed by Gurū Nānak and the last two one each by Gurū Rām Dās and Gurū Arjan. Gurū Nānak's hymns have been selected from *rāgas*, *Gaurī Dīpakī*, *Āsā* and *Dhanāsrī* while the remaining two hymns have been taken from *Gaurī Pūrābi*. The selection of hymns for the *Sohilā* was made in two or three phases. Bhāi Gurdās, *Vārāṇ*, 1.38, states that, in Gurū Nānak's time, *Sodarū* and *Āratī* were sung in the evening while *Japu* was recited in the early hours of the morning. Then, evidently, the first and the second hymns only of the present text were called *Sohilā*, while the third hymn, also of Gurū Nānak, was called *Āratī* as it has been so captioned in the *Gurū Granth Sāhib*. These two were treated as distinct *bāṇīs*. Gurū Arjan added two more hymns and entered all the five in the *Gurū Granth Sāhib* in 1604 as one *bāṇī* under the title of *Sohilā*. Later, more exactly and authoritatively, this *bāṇī* was prescribed as the bedtime prayer when, in 1699, Gurū Gobind Singh inaugurated the *Khālsā* administering to it the vows of *amrit* and laying down for it a specific code. Legend has grown, that if one goes to bed after reciting the *Sohilā*, one's house will be immune from burglars or that Gurū Nānak stands by the side of one who recites the *Sohilā*. These sayings metaphorically convey the truth that burglars, i.e. *kāma* (lust), *krodha* (anger), *lobha* (avarice), *moha* (attachment) and *ahāṅkāra* (egoism) will not enter, even in dream or sleep, the mind of one who reads the *Sohilā*, with concentration. The Gurū will himself watch over him, so ennobling is the effect of this *bāṇī*. Again by association between the states of sleep and death, which is considered to be the final and eternal sleep, the *Sohilā* began to be recited as the cremation prayer after the pyre

had been lit, to put the deceased to peaceful sleep. The text praises the Creator as Nirbhau or fearless. Eradication of fear, the fear of death, is central to its theme. As the *bañī* is short and rich in symbolic meaning, it is suitable to the time and occasions prescribed for its recitation.

Sohilā literally means a song of praise or eulogy; *kīrtan* also signifies singing of praise. The title for the *bāñī* was evidently suggested by the first hymn of it wherein the word *Sohilā* occurs thrice. The word *kīrtan* might have been added to the title later as the word *kīrti* (*kirtī*) which is the equivalent of *sohilā*, also occurs in the very first verse of the first hymn of the *bāñī*. The *Sohilā* is one of the most pictorial basis meant for daily recitation.

Psychologically, such a composition is best suited to bedtime when a tired mind can enter the land or sleep through a sequence of pictures and symbols. There is the symbol of the newly wedded bride being escorted into the house of her parents-in-law, the ladies pouring, as is the Punjabi custom, oil on the threshold which she is to cross ; of the sun which is the cause of seconds and minutes, day and night, months and seasons ; of the star-studded sky, with the lamps of the sun and the moon burning brightly reflecting the light of the Supreme Brilliance; of the man, crippled by the thorn of *haumai* (ego or self-concern) -- thorn which can be removed only if he were to join the holy fellowship under the aegis of the Gurū, and, finally, of the caravan of the Brahmgiānīs (men of enlightenment) moving onward to the region of Truth and Eternal Bliss.

Man is advised to maintain a state of mind which conduces to constant remembrance of God. He is reminded that death must one day strike, but death, according to Gurū Nānak, could be a passage to the blissful condition of union with the Creator. There are many different schools of religious philosophy, but the one which teaches the praise of God is the truest. The third hymn of Gurū Nānak, which is one of the finest specimens of Punjabi poetry, in addition to being a devotional song of profound charm and appeal is believed to have been sung extempore in the historic temple of Jagannāth at Purī. The transcendence and immanence of the Creator, and the awe inspiring expanse and multifariousness of the creation are depicted through telling images. The music of the lines is captivating. The fourth hymn contrasts self-oriented men with those who are turned towards God. The fifth and the final hymn adjures man to save himself. He is reminded that, with every passing moment, life is ebbing away. Finally, it is proclaimed that only through God's grace can one apprehend the Reality.

The *Sohilā* adverts to the fundamental doctrines of Sikhism--theological, religious, and social. The Supreme Being is unique and without a second. All scriptures of religious systems are equal and worthy of reverence for each one of them manifests some facet of the Reality. All men are equal as the light of the Eternal One pervades each one of them. Of the two paths of egoistic materialism and devotional *bhakti*, the latter alone helps one to achieve liberation, the supreme goal of life. One who adheres to the principle of loving devotion is *nirbhau* (fearless). He conquers even the fear of death.