

## Religious Bārahmāhās in Punjab

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The *Guru Granth Sahib*, the holy book of Sikhs, houses two instances of *bārahmāhās*, the first by Guru Nānak and second by Guru Arjan. Vaudeville, Orsini, Sakata, etc. who have worked on this genre have mentioned the “religious *bārahmāsā*” as a separate category, but little attention has been given to it, and even lesser in case of the Sikh tradition. This paper studies the two *bārahmāhās* in the Granth for their formal and literary elements and the specific context of the historical process of collation, selection and anthologizing of the religious corpus of the Sikh faith.

In a comparative study of the two *bārahmāhās*, the paper will review the temporally structured genre of the *bārahmāhā* and the inventory of conventions that it brings to the doctrinal concerns of the burgeoning Sikh faith. The paper will also juxtapose this textual analysis with the soteriological and liturgical specificity of the *bārahmāhās*. This will include the performative significance of these *bārahmāhās* in the contemporary life of the religious community, both the communal aspect of the sect and the personal aspect of the devotee.

I show the religious *bārahmāhās* to be significant beyond being vessels for an avowedly didactic or instrumental purpose. I will present this comparative study of the *bārahmāhās* in the Granth in context of the landscape of further literary production in Punjabi : *bārahmāhās* were composed/ sung by Bulle Shah, Shah Murad, Hafiz Barkhurdar, among others, as well as written by poets/ devotees about a religious figure (for instance, a *bārahmāhā* has been written on Guru Gobind Singh elucidating an year from his life).