



BHAI BALBIR SINGH RAGI

Akademi Award: Other Major Traditions of Music (Gurbani)

Born on 23 March 1933 in Mrigindpura village in Amritsar district of Punjab, Shri Balbir Singh Ragi was trained in Gurmat Sangeet by his great-grandfather Bhai Hira Singh, his grandfather Bhai Kundan Singh, his father Bhai Santa Singh, and his uncle Bhai Sohan Singh. Later, he honed his Gurbani-singing under Bhai Arjan Singh Tarangar, and familiarized himself also with other streams of music and musical instruments. He learnt Khayal as a student of Krishna Rao Shankar Pandit, he studied Dhrupad under Nathu Ram, and trained in the Tabla with Ahmed Jan Thirakwa and Habibuddin Khan. He is adept at playing the harmonium, Dilruba, and Jaltarang.

True to his calling as a performer of devotional music, Shri Balbir Singh Ragi has sung Gurbani at the holiest of Sikh shrines, the Golden Temple of Amritsar, for a period of thirty-six years (1955-91). He is conversant with all the ragas of Gurbani Kirtan and their variant forms. This has enabled him not only to render the sacred music, but also to contribute to scholarship on the subject. He is the author of major works on Gurmat Sangeet such as *Asa di Vaar* and *Shalok Varran te Vadheek*. His singing has been documented by institutions preserving Sikh devotional music. Shri Balbir Singh has contributed to seminars on devotional music at several institutions in the country. He has also commercial recordings to his credit.

For his long years of service in Gurmat Sangeet, Shri Balbir Singh has been honoured by several institutions in Punjab. He is a recipient of the Shiromani Ragi award conferred by the Punjabi Language Department of the Government of Punjab (2001); the Sant Sarwan Singh Gandharva award given by Dera Dumeli, Jalandhar (2001); and the Bhai Nand Lal Goya Sanman awarded by the Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar (2010).

Bhai Balbir Singh Ragi receives the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award for his contribution to Gurbani music.