



The Folk Roots of Raag Wadhans

Author: Baani Kaur Luthra

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Abstract

This paper examines Raag Wadhans and its bani in Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji. Raag Wadhans is a folk-based raag with many similarities to other Indian classical raags. In this paper, a structural overview of the raag is provided, as well as an analysis that compares Raag Wadhans with structurally similar raags. The bani of the raag in Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji is included, with an insight on the contributors to this raag. Finally, some analysis and interpretation of the bani of Raag Wadhans—specifically alahania, ghoria, and Wadhans Ki Vaar—in a cultural context is provided as an attempt to elucidate the nature of the raag as well as the message that the bani is conveying.

Introduction

In the tradition of classical Indian music, whether it be Hindustani or Carnatic, raags have been used to inspire emotions in the listener.¹ The Sikh Gurus wrote their bani with raags to enhance the message being conveyed—some raags will convey somber emotions of separation and longing while others will incite feelings of inspiration and joy. For example, Raag Wadhans, which will be discussed in this paper, has a quiet and tender mood that generally explains how closeness to the teachings of the Guru is the only channel to Waheguru. Yet, the bani of Raag Wadhans is used in somewhat contrasting contexts: in the events of marriage as well as death with folk poetry: Ghoria (ਘੋੜੀਆ) to be sung for the Sikh marriage processions⁴ and Alahania (ਅਲਾਹਣੀਆ) to be sung in the traditional funeral rites.⁵

In this manner, the feelings of joy and sorrow are treated the same with the use of Raag Wadhans in both of these Bania⁶, but still expressing sentiments of devotion and closeness to Waheguru.⁵ This paper aims to take a deeper look into Raag Wadhans and its bani, including Alahania, Ghoria, and Wadhans Ki Vaar. Although Raag Wadhans has structural similarities to other raags, it is unique in its folk origins. When looking at the folk aspect of this raag, there is much to observe when it comes to the specialized bani such as Ghoria, Alahania, and Wadhans Ki Vaar, especially relating to the situation the bani is used and the messages conveyed. It is important to discuss the cultural context of this raag and why our Gurus wrote these bania in Raag Wadhans to draw relationships between the folk origin of the raag and the meaning of the bani in order for these valuable bania, as well as the beauty of this unique raag, to be preserved.

Structural Description

This section will provide a structural overview of Raag Wadhans, as well as its mishrat form: Raag Wadhans Dakhni. A *mishrat raag* is a structural variation of a shudh raag¹, and Raag Wadhans Dakhni is the only variation of Raag Wadhans. The phrase “Dakhni” refers to the Dakhni, or Deccan, region of India, which includes the southern states of Maharashtra, Karnataka, and Telangana.⁹ So, Raag Wadhans Dakhni is a blend of the pure Hindustani form of Raag Wadhans with an influence of South Indian music.¹⁰

The following section accounts for various aspects of raag theory. The aroh of the raag is the ascending scale, and the avroh of a raag is the descending scale. The aroh and avroh demonstrate the pattern that musicians follow when ascending or descending in that given raag.¹ Note that, in this paper, shudh surs are represented with a capital letter (ex: N for nishad shudh) and vakrit surs—the komal (flat) or teevhar (sharp)—are represented with lowercase letters (n for nishad komal). Thaata is a system in which raags can be classified based on the vakrit surs in the raag.¹⁴ Vadi and samvadi are also discussed. The vadi of a raag is the most commonly held sur in the raag while the samvadi is the second most commonly held sur. Varjit surs are also discussed: varjit surs are forbidden in the aroh. It is important to account for these surs because their usage alters the essence of the raag or can even change it to a different raag.¹⁴ Finally, jaati is a different way of classifying raags based on the number of surs used in the aroh and avroh. Jaati is formatted in an X-Y format; X represents the number of surs in the aroh while Y represents the number of surs in the avroh. The possible numbers can be audav (five surs), shaudav (six surs), and sampooran (all seven surs). Any X-Y combination of audav, shaudav, or sampooran are valid jaatis.

Raag Wadhans:

Raag Wadhans is the eighth shudh raag in Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji and it is present from ang 557 to 594. The aroh is as follows: [SRMP, DnP, NS’], meaning that on the ascending scale, compositions in Raag Wadhans will generally follow this pattern. The avroh is as follows: [S’nPDMGRSN.S], representing the descending scale. The thaata of this raag is Khamaaj: as observed, the note Nishad (Ni) is vakrit, making it Ni komal (ni). The vadi of this raag is Pancham (Pa) while the samvadi is Rishab (Re), meaning that Pa is the most commonly held sur while Re is the second most commonly held sur. The jaati of this Raag is shaudav-sampooran, meaning that the ascending scale uses six surs, while the descending scale uses all seven.^{2, 7}

Raag Wadhans Dakhni:

Raag Wadhans Dakhni is the 16th mishrat raag in Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji and it is present on ang 580. The aroh is as follows: [S, RMPDS’]. The avroh is: [S’nDPM, RMG,

SRn.DS]. The thaat of this raag is Khamaaj, so nishad (Ni) is vakrit like Raag Wadhans. The vadi of this raag is pancham (Pa) while the samvadi is shadaj (Sa). The jaati of this raag is audav-sampoorn, meaning that the ascending scale uses five notes while the descending scale uses all seven.⁸, *Table 1* presents a digestible representation of the previous information, with differences apparent^{3,2}:

<i>Table 1: Raag Wadhans vs. Raag Wadhans Dakhni</i>		
	Raag Wadhans	Raag Wadhans Dakhni
Aroh	SRMP, DnP, NS'	S, RMP,DS'
Avroh	S'nP, DM, GR, SN.S	S'nDP, MRMGS
Thaat	Khamaaj	Khamaaj
Vadi	Pancham	Pancham
Samvadi	Rishabh	Shadaj
Jaati	Shaudav-sampoorn	Audav-sampoorn
Pehar	3rd Pehar of the day	1st Pehar of the night

Comparative analysis:

It is also important to compare Raag Wadhans to other raags with structural similarities. According to Professor Kartar Singh, Raag Wadhans is a combination of raags Des, Barwa, Tilak Kamod, and Sarang.³ However, for this paper, Raag Wadhans will be compared with Raag Tilak Kamod, Raag Des, and Raag Sorath, which are all structurally similar to Raag Wadhans.

Raag Tilak Kamod:

Raag Tilak Kamod is a melodious Hindustani classical raag that is suitable for singing Geet, Ghazal, Tarana, Khyal, and more. *Table 2* contains the structural components of this raag²⁹:

<i>Table 2: Raag Tilak Kamod</i>	
Aroh	SRMPNS'
Avroh	S'PDMGSRGSN.P.N.SRGS
Thaat	Khamaaj

Vadi	Shadaj
Samvadi	Pancham
Jaati	Audav-Sampooran
Pehar	2nd Pehar of the night

Most prominently, Raag Tilak Kamod and Raag Wadhans share the phrase SN.P.N.SR: this phrase is part of the *mukh ang*, or common phrases, of the raags. Additionally, the aroh of Raag Wadhans and Raag Tilak Kamod are nearly identical. The avrohs of the two raags use the same notes, but differently: n (nishad komal) is not used in the avroh of Raag Tilak Kamod as observable in *Table 2*.

Raag Des:

Raag Des is another Hindustani classical raag with structural similarities to Raag Wadhans. *Table 3* has a break down the structural components of this raag³⁰:

<i>Table 3: Raag Des</i>	
Aroh	SRMPNS'
Avroh	S'nDPDMGRGN.S
Thaat	Khamaaj
Vadi	Rishabh
Samvadi	Pancham
Jaati	Audav-Sampooran
Pehar	2nd Pehar of the night

Raag Des also has a similar aroh to Raag Wadhans, as the aroh of Raag Tilak Kamod is identical to that of Des. However, in Raag Des, n (nishad komal) can be used in the ascending scale.³⁰ Additionally, the use of NPNS' is absent in Raag Des, while commonly used in Raag Wadhans.

Raag Sorath:

Raag Sorath is a raag based in the tradition of Gurmat Sangeet and it is the ninth shudh raag found on Ang 595-695 of Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji. *Table 4* includes the structural components of this raag³¹:

<i>Table 4: Raag Sorath</i>	
Aroh	SRMPNS'
Avroh	S'nDPMRSRN.S
Thaat	Khamaaj
Vadi	Rishabh
Samvadi	Dhaivat
Jaati	Audav-Shaudav
Pehar	1st Pehar of the night

Similarly to Raag Des, Raag Sorath also doesn't use the phrase nPNS' while Wadhans does. However, the aroh of both raags, Sorath and Wadhans, are similar. One defining characteristic of this Raag Sorath is that gandhar is used strictly as a meend in the avroh in Raag Sorath.³¹ Interestingly enough, if gandhar is held, the raag changes from Raag Sorath to Raag Des, illustrating the importance of following the structural boundaries of each raag.

When examining Raag Wadhans in the context of other raags, it is evident that it is structurally similar to other Raags, such as Tilak Kamod, Des, and Sorath based on mukh ang, aroh, and avroh. This phenomenon is because Raag Wadhans is folk-based, accounting for its similarities to other raags of Indian music—the folk roots of this raag will be elaborated on in the following sections of this paper by examining the bani in Raag Wadhans. However, the unique usage of the surs that comprise the raags discussed above give Raag Wadhans its own distinct flavor and emotions that characterize the bani written in this raag.

Bani of Raag Wadhans

This raag can be traced back to Sanskrit texts in which it is referred to as “Vadahansika” as a ragini¹², a melody created from altering a pre-existing raag.¹³ However, the bani of raag Wadhans has roots that can be traced to cultural traditions and folklore.

Types of bani:

In Raag Wadhans, the Bani in Sri Guru Granth Sahib begins with shabads in 1, 3, 4, and 5 pade, or stanzas.³³ Shabads with eight pade are known as *ashtpadiaan*, which literally translates to “eight stanzas,” and shabads with six verses are known as *chhants*. Specialized kinds of chhants, called *ghoria*, are sung for weddings. There are also specialized compositions known as *alahania*, which are sung in death ceremonies. It is also interesting to note that one *alahania* in Sri Guru Granth Sahib is written in the Dakhni form of Raag Wadhans. Finally, there is one *vaar* in Raag Wadhans. A *vaar* is a style of sangeet that is used to tell folk stories²³ There are in total 22 *vaars* in Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji, with one of them in Raag Wadhans.

Contributors to Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji:

There are four contributors to Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji in Raag Wadhans: Sri Guru Nanak Dev Ji, Sri Guru Amardas Ji, Sri Guru Ramdas Ji, and Sri Guru Arjan Dev Ji. *Table 5* includes information on each contributor to Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji in Raag Wadhans and how many shabads of each type of bani they contributed:

<i>Table 5: Contributors to SGGS in Raag Wadhans and Types of Bani Contributed (In Quantity)</i>						
	Pade	Ashtpadi	Chhant	Alahania	Ghoria	Vaar
Sri Guru Nanak Dev Ji	1	-	2	5	-	-
Sri Guru Amardas Ji	9	2	6	-	-	-
Sri Guru Ramdas Ji	3	-	6*	-	2	1
Sri Guru Arjan Dev Ji	9	-	3	-	-	-

**includes 2 ghoria*

The following sections will take a closer look at three kinds/pieces of bani: *alahania*, *ghoria*, and Wadhans Ki Vaar. The reason for the usage of this bani is the folk aspect of Raag Wadhans. *Alahania* and *ghoria* are directly related to cultural practices, and a *vaar* inherently has folk ties to it as a *vaar* is meant to tell some type of folklore.

Alahania:

Alahania (ਅਲਾਹਣੀਆ) is a bani written by Guru Nanak Dev Ji in Raag Wadhans found on ang 578-585 which is derived from a form of poetry sang in the funerary tradition of siapa, where women traditionally assemble to beat their chests and sing alahanian in a mournful, tragic tone.³ Originally, “*Alahania*” was a Punjabi form of mournful poetry, so Guru Nanak Dev Ji wrote his bani in this traditional folk style in Raag Wadhans.⁵ However, a distinction between cultural alahania and alahania in Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji should be noted. Cultural alahania invoke feelings of grief and sorrow. Bhai Vir Singh explains that cultural alahania “contain elements of grief and ungratefulness” creating cycles of further mourning and grief—on the other hand, the alahania written by Guru Ji counter the sorrowful environment created by the cultural alahania as a way to “sooth the wound”.¹⁷ Guru Ji advises against the surface level weeping and provides comfort to those mourning; instead, he encourages singing the praises of Ik Oankaar by using the widely appreciated, and thus, highly communicative poetry form of alahania. Below is the first stanza of a composition written by Guru Nanak Dev Ji on ang 578, along with a literal translation of each tuk^{18,20}:

ਧੰਨੁ ਸਿਰੰਦਾ ਸਚਾ ਪਾਤਿਸਾਹੁ ਜਿਨਿ ਜਗੁ ਧੰਧੈ ਲਾਇਆ ॥

Praiseworthy is the Creator, the true Sovereign, Who has engaged the world in worldly affair(s).

ਮੁਹਲਤਿ ਪੁਨੀ ਪਾਈ ਭਰੀ ਜਾਨੀਅੜਾ ਘਤਿ ਚਲਾਇਆ ॥

(When the allotted) time was over; the vessel became full; having placed (the chains, the messengers of death) made the dear one proceed.

ਜਾਨੀ ਘਤਿ ਚਲਾਇਆ ਲਿਖਿਆ ਆਇਆ ਰੁੰਨੇ ਵੀਰ ਸਬਾਏ ॥

Having placed (the chains, the messengers of death) made the dear one proceed (when) the written (Order) came; all the brothers cried.

ਕਾਇਆ ਹੰਸ ਥੀਆ ਵੇਛੇੜਾ ਜਾਂ ਦਿਨ ਪੁੰਨੇ ਮੇਰੀ ਮਾਏ ॥

Separation of body (and) swan happened, when the days were over, (O) my mother!

ਜੇਹਾ ਲਿਖਿਆ ਤੇਹਾ ਪਾਇਆ ਜੇਹਾ ਪੁਰਬਿ ਕਮਾਇਆ ॥

As was written, as was earned from the Origin, so (the being) received.

ਧੰਨੁ ਸਿਰੰਦਾ ਸਚਾ ਪਾਤਿਸਾਹੁ ਜਿਨਿ ਜਗੁ ਧੰਧੈ ਲਾਇਆ ॥ ੧ ॥

Praiseworthy is the Creator, the true Sovereign, Who has engaged the world in worldly affair(s).1.

The first line of the stanza begins with the phrase “*dhann sirandaa sachaa paatshaah*,” which is an immediate teaching of staying connected to Ik Oankaar. This is later explained in the fifth tuk: “*jeha likhkaa tehaa paatshaah jin jag dhandhae laaiaa*.” Guru ji explains with the symbolism of a swan, commonly used in Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji to represent a peaceful, wisdom-oriented individual.¹⁹ Interestingly enough, the word “Wadhans” literally translates to “the great swan,” characterizing the peaceful and tender nature of the raag.¹⁷ In the context of a deceased family member, the alahania written in Raag Wadhans encourages those mourning to praise Ik Oankaar rather than deepen emotional wounds with the practice of cultural alahania.

Ghoria:

Ghoria (ਘੋੜੀਆ) is a bani written by Guru Ramdas Ji which appears on ang 575-576 of Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji. The word “ghori” translates to “mare,” as ghoria are sung in the event of a marriage. During the ceremony in which the groom rides a mare to the house of the bride, the female relatives of the groom sing a type of Punjabi folk poetry called *ghoria*, which honor the groom’s ancestry and wish him a prosperous marriage.⁷ Out of the six *chhants*, or compositions with a folk sangeet influenced singing style²³, written by Guru Ramdas Ji in Raag Wadhans, the last two are titled “Ghoria”.²⁴ Guru Ramdas Ji used the style of ghoria to write this bani because of its relevance to marriage: a prevalent theme in ghoria is the process of uniting with Ik Oankaar, diverging the subject of the ghoria away from the groom himself. The following segment of bani is the first stanza of a *chhant* found on ang 575 of Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji and a literal translation of each tuk is provided²².

21:

ਦੇਹ ਤੇਜਣਿ ਜੀ ਰਾਮਿ ਉਪਾਈਆ ਰਾਮ ॥

The (human) body is (like) a mare, ji! Ram has created (it), Ram.

ਧੰਨੁ ਮਾਣਸ ਜਨਮੁ ਪੁੰਨਿ ਪਾਈਆ ਰਾਮ ॥

Blessed is the human birth; (the human body) has been received through virtuous deeds, Ram.

ਮਾਣਸ ਜਨਮੁ ਵਡ ਪੁੰਨੇ ਪਾਈਆ ਦੇਹ ਸੁ ਕੰਚਨ ਚੰਗੜੀਆ ॥

The human birth has been received through great virtuous deeds; the gold-like body is excellent.

ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਰੰਗੁ ਚਲੁਲਾ ਪਾਵੈ ਹਰਿ ਹਰਿ ਹਰਿ ਨਵ ਰੰਗੜੀਆ ॥

(The body) attains deep red color through the Guru; (reciting) Hari, Hari, Hari (it becomes) of new color.

ਏਹ ਦੇਹ ਸੁ ਬਾਕੀ ਜਿਤੁ ਹਰਿ ਜਾਪੀ ਹਰਿ ਹਰਿ ਨਾਮਿ ਸੁਹਾਵੀਆ ॥

This body is beautiful, through which Hari is known; (it) becomes pleasant through the Hari-Hari Nam.

ਵਡਭਾਗੀ ਪਾਈ ਨਾਮੁ ਸਖਾਈ ਜਨ ਨਾਨਕ ਰਾਮਿ ਉਪਾਈਆ ॥ ੧ ॥

Servant Nanak: (The body) has been received through great fortunes; Nam is (its) friend; Ram has created (it).1.

In this bani, Guru Ji comments how the existence of human bodies is blessed as it was warranted for by Ik Oankaar: “*deh tejan ji raam upjeeaa raam.*” The word “tejan” refers to a superior breed of Arabian horse²², and Guru Ji’s use of this word regards the creation of the human body by Ik Oankaar as excellent. Yet, Guru Ji also explains that the blessed human body can only become meaningful through good deeds: “*eh deh so baanki jit har jaapi har har naam suhaaveeaa*”.²² Through ghorla, Guru Ramdas Ji provides teachings on how to achieve closeness to Ik Oankaar, which is a recurring theme in bani in Raag Wadhans as the “swan-like” and peaceful quality of the raag²² creates a devotional tone. Guru Ji uses the familiar style of cultural ghorla, or wedding songs, to explain to Sikhs how they can form a spiritual union with Ik Oankaar, just as a marriage represents a worldly union.

Wadhans Ki Vaar Mahala 4 - lalaan behleemaa kee dhun gaavani:

All 21 paudis of Wadhans Ki Vaar are written by Guru Ramdas Ji ^25 and the vaar is found on ang 585-594 of Sri Guru Granth Sahib. A *vaar* is a style of sangeet derived from folklore that tells a story and this vaar is sung with a *dhuni*, a specific folk tune that is prescribed to the vaar.²³ The dhuni of this vaar is called “*lalaan behleemaa kee dhun gaavani*” and it is based on the story of Lalaan and Behleemaa, two Rajput landlords who came to an agreement to help each other when a drought occurred. However, in the folklore, Lalaan broke the deal of sharing a fraction of his crop, causing a fight in which Behleemaa captured Lalaan and secured his share, forcing him to fulfill his duty.^{25, 28} In the actual vaar, the conflict is between a gursikh who follows the guidance of the Guru and an impostor, creating a contrast between good and evil, and the vaar ends with sentiments of hope, as Ik Oankaar permeates everything, and nothing else can change anything Below is the first paudi of the bani with literal translations for each tuk^{26, 27}:

ਸਬਦਿ ਰਤੇ ਵਡ ਹੰਸ ਹੈ ਸਚੁ ਨਾਮੁ ਉਰਿ ਧਾਰਿ ॥

The great swans are imbued with the Word of the Shabad; they enshrine the True Name within their hearts.

ਸਚੁ ਸੰਗ੍ਰਹਹਿ ਸਦ ਸਚਿ ਰਹਹਿ ਸਚੈ ਨਾਮਿ ਪਿਆਰਿ ॥

They gather Truth, remain always in Truth, and love the True Name.

ਸਦਾ ਨਿਰਮਲ ਮੈਲੁ ਨ ਲਗਈ ਨਦਰਿ ਕੀਤੀ ਕਰਤਾਰਿ ॥

They are always pure and immaculate - filth does not touch them; they are blessed with the Grace of the Creator Lord.

ਨਾਨਕ ਹਉ ਤਿਨ ਕੈ ਬਲਿਹਾਰਣੈ ਜੋ ਅਨਦਿਨੁ ਜਪਹਿ ਮੁਰਾਰਿ ॥ ੧ ॥

Nanak, I am a sacrifice to those who, night and day, meditate on the Lord. 1.

Guru Ji praises those who praise Ik Oankaar using the imagery of the swan once more in Raag Wadhans, indicating that the ones who remain pure and swan-like are those who are peaceful, embrace the word of the Guru and are not caught up in self-oriented or worldly temptations. *Mael* (“dirt”), referring to vices, cannot affect these individuals because they are blessed by Waheguru.

Above, a breakdown and the main takeaway of the first paudi of Wadhans Ki Vaar was provided. *Table 6* outlines the overall takeaway of the entire vaar, with a one-sentence summary of each paudi (21 total) as per the interpretation of Professor Sahib Singh²⁵:

Table 6: Wadhans Ki Vaar: Summary and Overall Takeaway, Paudi-by-Paudi	
Paudi	Takeaway of Each Paudi
1	The benefit of the service of Waheguru, who provides charity to all beings, only comes from immersing in the word of the Guru
2	Waheguru is present in the word of the Guru, saving other people from vices by demonstrating closeness to God and providing guidance to the correct path.
3	Only the Guru can lead people to Waheguru, as the Guru teaches men to forget worldly attachment and to instead immerse in the name of Waheguru.

4	The Guru leads the Sikh into the Satsang (community/congregation) which leads to the practice of Simran, and thus, further thought about Waheguru.
5	The praise of Waheguru and guidance of the Guru teaches the Sikh about the nature of Waheguru, as he joins the Guru in serving Waheguru and living a contented life.
6	Because of these new teachings, the Sikh no longer clings to false hopes and regrets because he focuses on the remembrance of Waheguru.
7	The Sikh immerses in the name of God under the guidance of the Guru, and the haumai (ego) is removed from his body and he becomes closer to Waheguru.
8	The Guru convinces the man of Waheguru's capability of doing everything and knowing the qualities of each person; he is convinced that he is one with God.
9	The mind of the Guru is pure, as he is the king of kings who comprehends the value of the name of the Lord and sees God as all-pervading.
10	There is only one god for all beings, and a person in need is fulfilled by meditating on the name of God, eradicating his desire for maya (greed).
11	The "Name" of God can only come from the guidance of the Guru: those fortunate enough are able to gain access to this and reap the benefits of closeness to Waheguru.
12	The Sikh, guided by the Guru, removes vices from his mind and replaces them with love; he believes that the only true companion in life is Waheguru.
13	The great men of the past (Prahalaad, Janak, Vashishta) all required the guidance of the Guru and only the Guru to earn the gift of Simran.
14	If a person keeps the name of God in mind, the whole world bows before him; however, this can only be achieved with the help of the Guru.
15	Through sewa (selfless service), the Sikh realizes that Waheguru is life's true companion and mentor: living in this state prevents the Sikh from the burden of vices.
16	The name of the Lord protects the Sikh, freeing him from maya through his understanding gained from the Guru.

17	There are always those engaged in worldly/material activities, but the reward that a Sikh finds in the name of God is not found in these activities: such devotees who take the guidance of the Guru are rare but existent.
18	The person who follows the will of the Guru is fortunate—meditation leads him to happiness.
19	By taking the guidance of the Sat Guru, the mind gains peace and can experience the feeling of friendship even with an enemy.
20	The Sikh's other worldly desires are eliminated through making the name of God the basis of his life, making him recognize Waheguru everywhere.
21	Through chanting the name of God in the presence of the Guru, the Sikh learns that Ik Oankaar is the entity who creates all living beings: he has no worries as long as he continues his devotional meditation.

In Wadhans Ki Vaar, the journey of a Sikh taking the refuge of the Guru to gain closeness to Waheguru is expressed through the bani. *Table 6* is included to show the significance of each paudi in developing the overall takeaway of the vaar: without the protection and guidance of the Guru, one cannot succeed in serving Waheguru. What makes this vaar more significant, however, is the use of the dhuni. The popular folk tune of the dhuni serves to appeal to common people, making the message of the Guru about connection to Waheguru more accessible. Guru Ramdas Ji presents the journey to becoming a gursikh in a familiar folk format that is digestible to people from all walks of life.

Conclusion

Raag Wadhans has been used in various types of specialized bani, such as alahania and ghoria. What makes this curious, however, is the contrasting nature of the situations in which these pieces of bani are used. Alahania were written by Sri Guru Nanak Dev Ji for death ceremonies, whereas ghoria were written by Sri Guru Ramdas Ji for wedding processions. At a first glance, the emotions experienced in these events don't align—but the use of Raag Wadhans in these bani are less related to emotion as it is to the origin of the raag itself. As reiterated in this paper, Raag Wadhans is folk based—the bani written in this raag has the flavor of folk sangeet that is familiar to common people. By using Raag Wadhans, a raag that is centered around praising Ik Oankaar. In alahania, Sri Guru Nanak Dev Ji encourages people to discontinue the mournful practice of siapa, and instead center the event of a death around the praise of Waheguru. With ghoria, Sri Guru Ramdas Ji takes

the focus of the wedding processions away from the groom and redirects it towards creating a relationship with Ik Oankaar. In Wadhans Ki Vaar, Guru Ji explains how to serve Waheguru by following the guidance of the Guru using a popular folk tune.

The overall aim of this paper was to take a closer look at Raag Wadhans and its bani in the context of this raag being folk-based. The pieces of bani examined—ghoria, alahania, and Wadhans Ki Vaar—were explained in the context of the events in which they are recited and small excerpts of the bani were interpreted. As stated before, much of the bani in Raag Wadhans serves to convey the importance of praising Ik Oankaar as the only method of connecting with Waheguru, and our Gurus are able to share this message in an easily parsable medium for common people because of the folk aspects of this raag—giving it an exceptionally unique and beautiful raag. Yet, it is important to consider some limitations of the interpretations provided. The interpretation of the bani in this paper was derived from multiple sources, some of which being exclusively in Punjabi. As a result, some discrepancies between the English interpretation in this paper and the original Punjabi source material may exist. Additionally, this paper also utilizes a small amount of amateur personal analysis in addition to the interpretations from external sources, which could contain some flaws (out of lack of experience) or bias. Nonetheless, this paper serves as an attempt at scratching the surface at the message of these unique pieces of gurbani in Raag Wadhans, hopefully allowing the reader to understand them in the context of the situations in which they are meant for. Thus, the use of the specialized bania that our Gurus wrote for occasions such as marriages and deaths can continue to be recited, replacing the worldly practices of the traditional cultural rites/ceremonies. Hopefully, through this paper, a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between Raag Wadhans, its bani, and the intended meanings of the bani highlights the importance of the relationship between cultural roots and the intent of our Gurus when reading gurbani.

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