INTRODUCTION.

The Bhakti movement gave us a treasure house of literature. The medieval saints have made an outstanding contribution to the provincial literatures of the period. There was a remarkable development of all the provincial languages under this new inspiration. From Sheikh Farid and Namdev down to the eighteenth century a literary tradition was developed whose aim was the moral and spiritual regeneration of our country. To this literary tradition belonged Gerib Das of Rohtak, the subject of our thesis.

A number of Saints by the name of Garib Das have been known in Indian history but out of these only two are outstanding for their contribution to Indian literature. One of them is Garib Das, brother of Maskin Das; both of whom are said to be twin sons of the famous Saint Dadu Deyal. Of all that this saint wrote only four small booklets are available (1) Anbha prabodh (2) Sakhi (3) Cheubole (4) pada. The total number of his poems is less than three hundred. This poet wrote mainly in Rajasthani. Garib Das of Rohtak, the subject of our thesis is a voluminous writer who has made an outstanding contribution to the literature of the eighteenth century. As a saint and poet he holds a distinct position.

About fifty years ago medieval saints were dismissed by Indian pundits as illiterate poets, whose writings were not worth studying from the point of view of literature. But the translation of Kabir's poems by Tagore and the critical study of the life and writings of Medieval Saints by Christian Missionary scholars,

suddenly aroused a deep academic interest in the writings of these saint poets. Punjabi and Hindi also acquired a very respectable status and position never acquired before. The language and thoughts of all the great saints began to be studied minutely.

My father was a great devotee of Sant Garib Das of Rohtak. He took me a number of times to the Satsang of Garib Dasi sect where the Granth of Garib Das was read loudly. It was only when I had passed my M.A. Examination in Punjabi in 1951 that my literary interest in the writings of Garib Das was aroused. I started collecting and studying all his writings some of which were available in Gurmukhi script and others in Devnagari script. Finding that there was a great difference in the text of printed versions, I tried to search some original manuscripts. I found some and even acquired one or two manuscripts but the major part of the oldest manuscripts were in the custody of Garib Dasi Sadhus. They refused even to show the manuscript for detailed studies.

A glance at some of the older manuscripts show that the compilers have taken considerable liberty in changing the forms of the original words from Punjabi or Haryanvi to Sanskritised Hindi. I, however, collected all the printed versions and found that the older the printed versions the clearer the text.

As Hindi was declared our National language and Punjabi the dominant language of the Punjab, research work in these languages found a great deal of encouragement. A number of excellent books appeared on the Nirgun School of Poetry and particularly on Kabir. As Garib Das was closely associated with Kabir Penth and acknowledges Kabir as his Guru, I felt inspired to prepare a thesis on Garib Das on the lines on which work had been done on Kabir and his near contemporaries.
As soon as I started working on this thesis, I realized that Garib Das was an outstanding builder of the thought and culture of Haryana, which has formed for centuries an important portion of Eastern Punjab. He was the son of this soil, the product of this culture, who added much to the thought and literature of this region.

According to Garib Das's son, Jait Ram Haryana was a land of contented people to whom God had given the gift of plenty of milk and robust health. He calls it a unique among all countries. "Sahaj dasan sa nyara". According to the above inscription of Sarbal Haryana has been called "the heaven on earth" desasti Hariyanākhyā prithviya svargaśanibha. Haryana is also known as Bangar. The word means Highland areas compared to the lowland area around Jamuna. Compared to the lowland area it was dry and forested.

Garib Das thus belonged to a region which has an eventful history and past but the permanent features of which are, the hardworking village community, the Hindu Traditions, and pious people whose simple contented life has not changed for centuries.

"There will be found in every house a bed for each grown up person, a corn-mill (Chakki), the huge pestle-mortar of wood (Ukhal and musal), a spinning wheel (Charkhi); along the wall are arranged large receptacles for grain, made of mud and called kothi. A number of cooking vessels (which are of brass if in a Hindu house and of tin if in Muslimman's) are scattered about the room, the commonest of which are the tray called thali, parat, tamhiya and tatri, cooking pots (thartiya and patili), the handi for preparing rabri and the kadboh for boiling milk; there will also be seen lotaba and cups (katorah) and the iron plate for cooking cakes (tawa)

will be on the hearth (chualah) Milk is made into curd in bharola and into ghee in balma or chum. Where nothing has lasted for centuries this village community with its folk-songs and folk-culture has lasted in this traditional form through all the upheavals of history. It is in such a village community that Garib Das was born and brought up. It is in such a village community, his moral and spiritual powers were fully developed. It is in such village communities he preached his revolutionary ideas and sang his songs.

III

While the medieval saints contributed much to the social reconstruction and spiritual development of our country, they left practical no evidence of the historical role they played, nor were their contemporaries wise enough to record important events of their life. The few historical events known about them took the form of legends. Thus to reconstruct the life story of these saints is a very difficult task. I had to encounter the same difficulty in reconstructing the events of Garib Das' life. Fortunately we have a little contemporary evidence from the writings of Garib Das' son, Jait Ram, who has devoted a page or two to the brief life of his father.

Jait Ram's historical poems about his father were helpful in clearing the confusion, about Garib Das' dates of birth and death, created by later writers. He also throws considerable light on the parentage and the progeny of Garib Das. It describes briefly the character and spiritual influence of the saint.

Besides this, important work of Jait Ram, no other contemporary

3. The Gazettier of Rohtak District 1883-4 p 48
evidence is found. Some brief historical references are found in Garib Das' own writings. We find conclusive evidence that he acknowledged Kabir as his Guru. This fact is supported by his son Jait Ram also. Although Garib Das pays homage to many saints and praises them all equally, he considers Kabir the greatest and his main source of inspiration.

This raised the question of Garib Das' relation to Kabir and Kabirpanth. The disciples of Garib Das have built a legend around the spiritual meeting between Garib Das and Kabir. This has probably been done with the clear intentions of building an independent school of thought. Garib Das had wanted to connect the saint with Kabir but they did not wish to identify themselves with Kabirpanthis. So in order to dissociate themselves from all branches of Kabirpanthis, they built a legend that the spiritual wisdom of Kabir was given by Kabir himself on a spiritual plane through an astral body.

But when we study the writings of Garib Das, there is no doubt left that he had studied the writings of Kabir and he tried to imitate not only the life and ideals of Kabir, but also imitated the poetry of Kabir. Whatever happened on the spiritual plane, it is quite clear on the earthly plane that Garib Das imbibed and studied the writings of Kabir quite early in life.

We also learn from near contemporary works that the influence of Dadupanthi followers of Kabir was considerable in Haryana and Rajasthan. Garib Das' father was also under their influence. The very scribe who wrote down the poems of Garib Das was a Dadupanthi. So we are inclined to conclude that Garib Das first came into contact with the thoughts and writings of Dadupanthi Saints. Subsequently he appears to have studied from the Adi Granth also. He appears to have imbibed the thoughts and writings of Kabir quite
The spiritual influence of Kabir could have taken place only if Garib Das came into contact with thoughts and writings of Kabir early in his life.

Not much is known about the life of Garib Das. All that I have been able to get are a few anecdotes and popular tales about the life of the saint. The ordinary tales have been so badly mixed up with legends and made supernatural events that it has been quite a difficult task to separate historic events from legendary tales built up later. The only biographical notes available on the saint's life are:

2. Preface of Granth Sahib edited by Swami Ajra Nand 1924 A.D.

Out of this very limited material I have reconstructed the life of the Saint into a short historical biography, which may be called the first attempt of this type. I have even recorded some of the legends in the hope that in times to come their true significance would be known.

Very little material is available on the travels of Garib Das and his relations to the rulers. Only one concrete evidence is available that he visited Mathura. Other unrecorded evidence is available on the basis of the shrines commemorating the visit of the Saint to these places. We find those shrines in Saharanpur and Paonta (Himachal Pradesh). Garib Das did not believe in going to places of pilgrimages for salvation. He speaks against them throughout his writings. He probably went to these places either on the invitation of some devotee or to keep away from political
upheavals and turmoils that were taking place at Delhi which was only thirty miles from his native place.

Another unsolved historical problems of Garib Das' life is: when and where did he meet the Emperor Mohammed Shah? What was the outcome of this meeting? What trespassed between the two. Some of his biographers are not even sure which Emperor he met. If at all Garib Das met any Emperor, it was Mohammed Shah who was genial and liberal enough to do such a thing as to invite the Hindu Saint. But too many legends and unbelievable stories have been added to the outcome of the meeting. It is quite possible that Garib Das asked the Emperor to be compassionate and kind to all communities, but it is hardly unbelievable that Garib Das was so unrealistic as to suggest, that if the Emperor became vegetarian, all the ills of his state would be solved. It is true that Garib Das preached Ahimsa (Non-violence) in a general way, but it is highly improbable that he could have suggested that the Emperor could conquer many countries through Ahimsa. The only credible element in the story is that Garib Das' saintliness and talk impressed the Emperor but created a good deal of jealousy and ill-will against him in the minds of fanatic courtiers.

We however find that Garib Das was a true saint in the respect that he never tried to win favour of kings and rulers. He never sought the patronage of the court. Not only did he keep away from the court, but he completely kept aloof from all the great upheavals of his time. During his life time many invasions and upheavals took place. One King after another was toppled. People at Delhi and round about Delhi passed through great misery. They exploited and looted the people and trampled them under foot. But we did not find a single word of protest against the cruelty and
oppression to which he was almost an eye-witness. The saint strictly confined himself to religious activities. (He did not like to pay any attention to the political ills of his country).

IV

Was Garib Das a Hindu or did he start a sect which could claim that it was neither Hindu nor Muslim? This is the question that arises about all saints who wrote and thought like Kabir.

There are innumerable references in Garib Das' Granth which say that he had parted from the sectarian practices of both the Hindus and Muslims. Like Kabir and Guru Nanak, he tries to interpret the Hindu and Muslim thoughts in the light of his own experience. He rejects many basic Hindu thoughts and believes such as accepting the authorities of the Vedas, rejection of the four fold order of society, and the four stages of life. He rejected Brahmanism and all that went with Brahmanism. He rejected some of the basic ceremonies of Hinduism like the wearing of sacred thread and ceremonies connected with it.

In spite of his neutral stand in the Hindu Muslim conflict we find that Garib Das still accepted many traditions of Hinduism. He respected the Hindu Avatars with the same reverence the average Hindu showed for them. He accepted the morals and ideals of Hindu culture as preached through the stories of Ramayana and Mahabharata. Hindu heroes and heroines of the classical age are a model which he presents for imitation and emulation. The Hindu element in his thoughts and the terminology which he uses to express himself is so dominant that he is much more a pious Hindu in his outlook than saints like Kabir or Ravidas. Our general conclusion is that Garib Das did not go out of the Hindu fold to the same extent as Buddhism and Sikhism did, but his
followers have ever since then been in a dilemma whether they should abide by Hindu ceremonies and institutions or they should build an independent church of their own. In this dilemma they have imitated Sikhism in adopting ceremonial institutions while they have imitated Hinduism in re-introducing the Sannyasa system and the Mahant orders. I have no hesitation in saying that they have imitated the Nirmala Sikh sect in every respect, which was permitted to put on ochre coloured robes to get access into the Sanskrit institutions of Benaras. Thus we can conclude that Garib Dasis are a Kabirpanthi sect which has tried to maintain its identity and independence even from other Kabirpanthi sects within the Hindu fold. The question arises how do Garib Das and his followers try to maintain this position? What are the distinctive features of this sect? In our study these can be summed up as follows:

1. Belief in the Supreme Being. Garib Das was a staunch monist. He believed in the one Supreme God whom people called by different names. Ram and Rahim, Hari and Allah were terms applied to the same God. He is the God who neither favours Hindus nor Muslims but judges all men by their deeds. Garib Das did not believe in any god and goddess. He strongly denounced the worship of all gods and goddesses.

2. The Guru. In the life and work of Garib Das takes the same place which is taken by the Avataras in other Hindu sects. It stands for Kabir alone in the life of Garib Das. The Garib Dasis however, look upon Garib Das as the real avatar (reincarnation) of Kabir and they consider him to be the true Guru along with Kabir. The concept of the Guru among the Garibpantis is almost the same as that amongst the Sikhs. The spirit of the Guru is identified with the spirit of God and is considered to be eternal. Now it is
also identified with the Panth (Granth) of Garib Das and the Garib Dasis have started looking upon Garib's Granth as an embodiment of his spirit.

Worship. As the majority of the Hindu temples have idols and Garib Dasis are strongly opposed to all types of idol worship, the mode of worship of Garib Das and his followers has drifted away from the common Hindu mode of worship. As the Garib Dasis have given up most of the Hindu ceremonies connected with the birth, wearing sacred thread, marriage and death, their mode of worship had to be different. As a matter of fact for over a century and half Garib Dasis did not have any institutions of their own except a few mandirs and a few copies of their Granth. The compilation of Garib Das' Granth and institution ceremonies on the pattern of Sikh ceremonies and worship took place nearly a century and half after Garib Das' death. In between that period the followers must have mainly adopted Hindu ceremonies. This lack of institutional basis of the Garib Panth has perhaps been the one main cause of their weak influence. If they had strong, well marked religious institutions from the time of Garib Das, the Garib Dasi panth might have been on a firm footing. At a later stage a new idea was introduced according to which the Sri, Mahant, the head of the Garib Dasi mission should always be a celibate. Apart from being in contradiction to the fundamental tenets of Garib Das' creed, this has introduced the cult of Sadhus, who call themselves Swamis, and remain unmarried. While some of the Sadhus are active missionaries and are doing good work for keeping Garib Das' creed alive, the Garib Dasipanth is developing into a creed of Sadhus, which perhaps the founder of this faith never desired. These Sadhus are however to be given the credit of giving a concrete shape and form to the mode of worship and prayer of the creed, which has
preserved it from relapsing into outmoded traditional Hindu forms of worship.

Garib Das’s Granth has now become the centre of worship of this sect. The pictures of Garib Das and other saints are respected but they are not used for worship. All prayer and all congregations and ceremonies are held in the presence of the Granth Sahib of Garib Das. Even the readings, recitation, continuous non-stop readings are done exactly in the same way as the Sikhs do it.

Sacrament and formal prayers. Garib Das’s do not have any set prayers as the Sikhs or Muslims have. They do not have any morning or evening prayers corresponding to the Japji and Rahiras of the Sikhs but they have some compositions of Garib Das which are read as Arati. The kadah prasad and the congregational prayer has also been organised in the last few decades in imitation of the Sikhs. Some Hindu families who owe only partial loyalty to Garib Dasi sect perform all the Hindu Samakara of the Brahminical order, but arrange the reading of the Granth of Garib Das in addition to it. There are a few staunch followers of Garib Das who followed the sacrament organised by the Garib Dasi Sadhus.

Code of Conduct. Garib Das’s religious beliefs stood for moral purity of man. Although Garib Das did not give any well formulated code of conduct, his moral influence on his followers and subsequent generation was such that they have developed a pattern of moral behaviour and formulated a code of conduct of their own. Their code of conduct can be summed up in the following principles.

1. Garib Dasi must discard all caste distinction. All men and women are equal before God. Untouchability and Casteism were completely abolished. A man of the lowest caste should be treated
as equal.

2. Non-injury, Ahimsa, and non-killing of all animals for the sake of eating them is a very important tenet of the Garib Dasi panth.

3. There should be no image-worship or idolatry. With complete faith in One God man should seek the favours and the grace of God only.

4. Truthfulness, contentment, purity of mind and freedom from all hypocrisy and sham should be the practices.

5. Fasts and going to places of pilgrimages are discouraged.

6. All superstitions are to be given up.

7. Simplicity in social life and customs is encouraged. Despite all other liberal ideas, the religious beliefs of Garib Panthis also suffered set-back in the face of orthodox and fanatic movements. It could never be a dominant religious movement either in Haryana or in the Punjab, but it has existed side by side with Nath Panthis, Shaivas, Vaishnavas and Sufis. It has had its own limited sphere of influence.

V

Garib Das did not aim at founding a new religion. He frankly admits that he is only a revivalist of the Nirgun movement upheld by Jaidev, Namdev, Kabir, Nanak, Sheikh Farid, Ramdas, Pipa and others. Out of these the influences of Kabir and Guru Nanak are predominant. We have, therefore, devoted two chapters in connection with the influences.

The influence of Kabir on Garib Das is by far the greatest. This is acknowledged by Garib Das and is further revealed by a closer study of Garib Das' poetry, as compared with that of Kabir's poetry. Even a superficial study of reference to Kabir shows that out of all the saints of the Nirgun School Garib Das studied and wrote about the life of Kabir in far greater detail than he did about any other
saint. Almost all the incidents of Kabir's life are described in detail, while only a few stray incidents of the life of other saints are mentioned.

Garib Das refers to Kabir's relations with Ramanand whom he considers the Guru of Kabir, and his relations with Sikander Lodhi, Shah Taqqi. He also refers to his son Kamal who is considered as a prominent saint of his times. It appears from it that Garib Das studied the life of Kabir in considerable detail.

The pattern and style of writing poetry in Garib Das' Granth shows that not only did the saint imitate the thoughts of his master but he wrote on all those topics on which Kabir wrote. His Sakhis are in the same order and follow the same subject of discussion as in Kabir's collection. The only difference perhaps is the language and depth of expression. The Sakhi portion of Kabir Granthavali and Garib's Granth are divided into the same angas, subjectwise sections, such as Gurdev.ka.ang, Sumirin.ka.ang, Birba.ka.ang, Gian.ka.ang, Ras.ka.ang, etc. We have shown that not only the thought pattern of these angas is the same but the expression and terminology used in each is the same. The same is true of the Ramanis and Shabdas and the compositions in Raga. Most of the Ragas in which Kabir wrote have been used by Garib Das for his own poetry.

The Padavali section is mostly written in Ragas. The pattern of writing the Padas is the same as that adopted by Kabir and other saints. From our discussion we can safely conclude that the influence of Kabir on Garib Das surpassed all other religious influences.

During the time of Garib Das, Kabir Panth was divided into a number of branches, each differentiating from the other for some
peculiarity. Over two centuries had elapsed since Kabir died. During these two centuries Kabirism spread under different leaders in Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and the Punjab. It must have taken different sectarian forms under different linguistic and cultural influences. But we find that Garib Das tried to capture the original spirit of Kabir’s ideals. He does not pay much attention to the various successors of Kabir in different provinces, though he mentions a few like Dedu and Kamal, but he tried to capture the original spirit of Kabir’s ideals. Out of the successors of Kabir he shows greater admiration for Dedu and Kamal than the Madhya Pradesh branch of Kabir’s followers that developed under Dharamdas. It is quite possible and also natural that Garib Das came under the influence of Kabir through the followers of Dedu and Kamal whose influence in this region was great. Garib Das appears to have read the writings of Dedu and Kamal.

The influence of Guru Nanak, the Adi Granth, and Sikhism in general is also conspicuous. That is why we have devoted a whole chapter to it. Garib Das mentions the name of Guru Nanak, but he does not mention the name of any other Sikh Guru. Historically Guru Gobind Singh was close to him, as Garib Das was born in the year in which Guru Gobind Singh died. But he does not even mention his name. Even the name of Guru Nanak is mentioned along with other saints like Dedu, Namdev and Ramanand. Garib does not refer to any incident in the life of Guru Nanak. He completely ignores mentioning any wellknown incident of the Guru’s life, though he mentions one or two incidents from the life of all saints.

However, the influences of the Adi Granth is tremendous. It is quite possible that Garib Das was in search of the most original
and oldest writings of Kabir and he came across them in the Adi Granth of the Sikhs. It was not easy to acquire a copy of the Adi Granth in those days and they were available only in Gurmukhi script. As most of the Sikhs of Punjab went to Rohtak and Rajasthan regions when they were so cruelly persecuted that a price was fixed for the head of a Sikh, it is quite possible that some groups of Sikhs moved into the forest regions of Banger with a few copies of the Adi Granth.

Either the saint himself studied Gurmukhi script or he had the Adi Granth read to him by some Sikh devotee. We have discussed in detail the linguistic and religious influence of the Adi Granth on Gerib Das. When we compare them, there is no doubt left that Gerib Das had studied the Adi Granth closely. The influence of Sikhism in general is also quite apparent.

What Gerib Das and his followers did not accept from Sikhism and the Adi Granth was the criticism of contemporary politics and revolutionary attitude towards the oppressors and tyrants. The Sikhs fought against tyranny in society and in the battle-field, while Gerib Das kept aloof from it. The aloofness which is maintained with regard to the tyranny and oppression of the rulers is also maintained with regard to the revolutionary movement set in motion by Guru Gobind Singh and Banda. All those who showed the slightest (open or secret) loyalty towards the Sikh Gurus were arrested and tortured to death. That possibly explains Gerib Das' complete silence about Guru Gobind Singh and Banda who were very close to his times.

Gerib Das, however, completely imitated the moral and spiritual excellence of the Adi Granth. His followers compiled his works and instituted its worship in the temples just as the adoration
of the Adi Granth is done in Sikh temples. Other important ceremonies of the sect were also built by his followers on the pattern of sikh ceremonies.

VI

Saints like Garib Das were not philosophers, yet they adopted a way of life which may safely be called their philosophy of life. In the light of their thoughts and experiences they criticised the other systems of thought with which they disagreed and appreciated others with which they agreed.

Garib Das' approach to philosophy is not through logic, reason or authority of scriptures. His approach is that of poets and mystics depending on intuition and medieval mystic literature. He does not argue or discusses theories. He writes whatever he sees and experiences.

God is not something that man should argue about. Garib Das gives a clear view of God and his philosophy of God can be called strict monism. He does not believe that there is any power other than God which controls the life and working of the universe. God is absolute and Infinite.

Garib Das does not dwell much on how the Universe was created by God, nor does he clearly define his views on relations between God and Prakirti (nature).

He does not give any hair-splitting theories about Maya and Karma. For him Maya is the world process which when not properly understood by the mind becomes misleading. Ordinarily Maya for him is simply wealth, and worldly glamour which absorbs the mind of man so much that he forgets all about his real self and God, and wastes his life in sensuousness. Karma is the bandage of our deeds and he believes that the chains of Karma can be broken by religious
practices. Those who receive the light of God wash off all their sins and shake off the burden of past Karma.

Garib Das' concept of the soul is the same as had been held in India from Vedic times. The soul is eternal. It comes to the world with a purpose and attains ultimate peace only when it attains that purpose.

Garib Das' approach to God is not metaphysical but ethical. Morality is the corner-stone of religion. For that matter the ethical views of Garib Das are very important. He was against hypocrisy and sham. He felt that in India religion and society have suffered much because of hypocrisy and sham. There was much more display of idle piety than any holiness among the religious people of India.

So Garib Das lays great stress on sincerity, truthfulness, purity of mind and simplicity. He was against all symbols and garbs. He believed that a religious man should distinguish himself by his virtues and deeds and not by his outward signs. Yogis and Sanyayasis of his time did not live up to the high ideals they were preaching. They became Yogis and Sanyayasis only by wearing the signs, symbols and dress of their sect.

Garib Das believed that man should never renounce the householder's life. He should lead a normal God-fearing life. He should live within the society and work for his living. He should never go about begging for his food. Charity and ahimsa should be practised by all who claim to be religious.

Garib Das lays great stress on patience and forbearance. One should not get irritated over the weaknesses of others, but should show tolerance and forgiving attitude. One should overlook the sins of others and help them to develop the good in them.

Garib Das was essentially a mystic. Like all mystics he says
that the purpose of human life is to see the divine Light. Like mystics he turns for enlightenment inward and points out that God is revealed within man and not outside him. The mystic path to God is not merely a theoretical concept, but a practical approach to God.

The key factors in Garib Das' practical mysticism are the Satguru and the Name of God. Without the grace and aid of the True Guru the ignorance and darkness about God cannot be dispelled and without his blessings religious life cannot be led. He is the teacher and the spiritual guide who dispels all doubts and gives inspiration through his mantra known as a Name or the Name of God. The Name of God is to be repeated with devotion. The devotion through the repetition of His Name is better spiritual practice than any other ritual e.g. penance, fasts, yoga and other practices involving self-mortification. Garib Das denounces these spiritual practices which involve physical and mental torture. He advocates a simple and natural approach to mystic life, the climax of which he calls Sahaja. The highest enlightenment can be attained at this stage.

Mystic union with God is described in various forms. It is like the bride meeting the Beloved at first and then it is like light blending with Light, water merging in the ocean. The mystic experience is described through the joy and bliss of Anhad Sabad Unstruck Music. Where there is God there is Light (Nur) and celestial music (Anhad Sabad) is heard. This state is called the Turiya. This state of samadhi can be attained in human life and the man who attains it is called a Jivan mukta. This is the highest state to which a religious man can aspire and it can be attained by regular efforts through the grace of the Guru by all.

This highest state can be attained by very few people. Those who attain it are the real saints and Brahm gyanis.
They see the light of God in every human being and at every place. The company of such saints alone is helpful in the moral and spiritual awakening of the people. These saints are dedicated souls who do not have any self-interest, but they devote all their energies for the betterment of society.

VII

The language and poetry of Garib Das has many faces of its beauty and charm. Haryana, the birthplace and area of Garib Das’ activities, is within three linguistic regions: Rajasthan, Punjab, and Utter Pradesh. So the language of Garib Das is representative not only of Haryana, but also of all the neighbouring linguistic regions.

The variety of poetic forms which give expression to the poetic outpourings of Garib Das is remarkably vast. It shows that he had a complete and wonderful grasp over this art and he was well-versed in Indian Prosody (Chhand Shastra). His verses are light, musical and have good amount of lyricism in them. All poems are written in order to be sung. His vast knowledge of Indian prosody is supplemented by his extensive knowledge of Ragas (musical modes). He has written his poems and songs in more Ragas than Kabir ever used, though he gives importance to those mainly used by Kabir.

His poetic style is lucid and makes his songs appealing to the learned as well as the common man. The moral and spiritual fervour of the poems is very inspiring. His dohras, jhulnas, sweyyas have a special charm of their own.

Although Garib Das has written in Punjabi, Western Hindi & Hariyanvi, he is at his best when he writes either in Punjabi or in Hariyanvi.

Poetry for Garib Das, is a vehicle for his thoughts, feelings
and experiences. When we read his verses we at once come into contact with the man behind the poetry. The man is more important than his art or style. Every verse he has written is a living image of his thoughts and experiences. His poetry tries to lift us higher from the earthly burdens of worldly life.

Garib Das puts his soul and spirit in each verse. There is a message and wisdom in all his swift-moving lines. There is repetition no doubt, but the repetition is only to emphasise the role and importance of spiritual life. He is distinguished from his contemporary poets in the eighteenth century for his super-abundance. Perhaps no eighteenth century poet has written so much and with such depth and intensity.

His imagery, similies and metaphors are all homely, natural and are symbolic of the rural atmosphere and culture of Haryana. The cow, the spinning wheel, the farmer, the shopkeeper are seen in his poetic imagery and background scenes. His poetry is neither so abstract as to be difficult in understanding nor it is so realistic as folk-poems are.

The linguistic contribution of Garib Das to the literature of Punjab is great. His mind is a rich store of words from Punjabi, Persian, Hindi, Sanskrit and Apabhramsha. When he likes, he can write in pure and chaste Punjabi. When he likes, he can mix up Punjabi with Hindi, Persian and other dialects.

For the terminology of religious and theological words he uses mostly Sanskrit, Prakrit or Apabhramsha forms of words which are used throughout North India.

For expression of social, cultural and personal feelings he uses Punjabi and Haryanvi words or Hindi words common to all Sant Bhasha.

Words of Persian used by him are mainly those which had
become part of the common speech or were used by sufis and Muslims to express Islamic religious ideas. Most of these words were used by Punjabi Sufi poets.

Punjabi and Hindi literature were not only coming close to each other but in the Granth of Garib Das, as in Adi Granth they are wedded together without each losing its identity, originality and charm.

Garib Das was gifted with deep and intimate knowledge of each language which he uses in his writings. When he writes Punjabi, he writes it without betraying that he was borne and brought up outside proper Punjabi areas. All the nouns, verbs, adjectives, conjunctions and declensions used by him are of pure and modern Punjabi in his Punjabi verses. At times he has tried to enrich Punjabi language with words from Persian and Western Hindi and Hariyanvi. At other times he enriches Hariyanvi and Sant Bhasha with Punjabi. The object of the saint perhaps is not only to synthesise thoughts but even the languages of different regions. In this direction the contribution of Garib Das is outstanding and surpasses all eighteenth century poets.

The search for old copies of Garib Das' poetry and editing them in their original and pure form is an important task which may be taken up by the scholars of the future. The recent attempts to print his works without taking care to preserve the original has led to misrepresentation of his language. Many Hariyanvi and Punjabi words have been changed into Sanskritised modern Hindi, thereby making it difficult for the scholar to study all his works in their original purity.

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