CHAPTER I.

ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF BHAKTI MOVEMENT
AND THE SANT PARAMPARA.

India is a land overflowing with religion and the religious spirit. Religion still, is an important influence in the life of Indian people. And yet people are not very dogmatic about their creeds. They have shown considerable tolerance for the ideas of other people.

To the people of India religion is a way of life. It must be lived and practised. It is something that lifts man morally and spiritually. It is the light of God which man carries in his heart.

Religion breeds true fellowship and emphasises on the brotherhood of man. It raises humanity morally and spiritually. It gives meaning to life and security to higher values. Religion lifts man above worldly life and puts him into contact with the Eternal. Of all the religious movements, Bhakti movement, with which the subject of our thesis is connected has been the most important and universal movement in Indian history.

The term Bhakti is derived from the Sanskrit root bhaej: which is one of its uses means "to adore". It, therefore, means adoration, and in its more distinctive use, "loving devotion of God". The term itself has a long history and the idea, a history much longer.

Classical ideas about the mode and ways of Bhakti have been expressed by Narada, Sandaliya, Prahlada and Uddhava. They unanimously describe Bhakti as the spiritual love which
is directed only towards God. When a man obtains love of God, he loves all, hates none, and becomes satisfied for ever. This love cannot be exploited for worldly purposes. It cannot be genuine if the lover shows the slightest attachment to the world. In it there is no room for jealousy or hatred, because the devotee sees everything as the manifestation of God. Thus Bhakti is both the ideal of spiritual life and the means to its attainment.

In Bhakti the mind of a devotee practices devotion unflagingly. He remains undisturbed by the ebb and flow of life and by the sorrows and sufferings of the world. By practice the mind can be made to flow uninterruptedly towards God as oil flows uninterruptedly when it is poured from one jar to another. Intense devotion for the Beloved makes this practice easy and pleasant. Such a love for the Beloved can be cultivated only by complete unselfishness, purity, compassion and truthfulness.

Love of a Bhakta is quite different from the sensuous love of worldly people. The love of a Bhakta is purged of all gross elements. He dedicates his body, mind and soul to the understanding and realization of God.

The cult of Bhakti is not a creed confined to some privileged people. It is open to people of all castes and nationalities. Even the lowliest persons can attain the highest realization through devotion. Throughout Indian history the most prominent Bhaktas have been from low caste society. By their devotion and spiritual achievements they acquired historic importance.

We give below some of the outstanding definitions and
interpretations of Bhakti given by our ancient Sages and scholars:

"Bhakti" says the author of Vivekacaudamani, "is continuous meditation on one's own true form, others hold that it is the meditation on truth of one's own Self." Says the Bhagavadgita "By merely hearing about the qualities of Mine, the mind flows constantly towards Me, who am the repository of all good; this unbroken flow of mind, just like the current of Ganges emptying into the Bay without a stop, is a mark of Bhakti Yoga beyond the Gunas; it is unconditioned and unthwarted love for the Supreme Person."

Madhvacarya defines Bhakti as:-

"Firm love of God more than for anything else, with full consciousness of His glory and magnitude." It is from this Bhakti alone results Release. It is the supreme love following the wake of previous knowledge and lasting for ever is designated as Bhakti. Bhakti should not be confused with mere emotional excitement or eroticism, as is often done; nor with fanaticism which sometime passes for religiosity and leads to all kinds of sectarian quarrels and bloodshed. Again, it is not mere credulousness or blind faith in whatever some priests may claim, or books only labelled as Sastras may be interpreted to say.

1. Vivekacaudamani P 32
2. Bhagvadgita III. 29. 11, 12
3. Madhvacharya: Mahabharata Paryanirnaya 1. 86.
The pure love of a Bhakta is quite different from the sensuous love of the worldly people. It is always free from selfishness and egoism. It has no desire or motive behind it. It is single minded love for the Supreme Beloved and has no thought of any other. A devotee completely forgets himself and merges his mind and soul in the spiritual Being of the Beloved. It is a love that is completely resigned to the Will of the Beloved and dedicated to His cause.

There are different levels of Bhakti or the love of God. The mental approach at the preparatory stage is different from the approach at the higher stages. Summing Aurobindo's views & on the subject M.P. Pundit points out that Bhakti may be artha Bhakti, which appeals for help in the hour of difficulty or it may be a deep thirst for knowledge.

Whatever the nature of initial Bhakti, it should be taken as a starting point and an effort should be made to gradually cleanse its contents, purge it of its grosser motives, and turn it more and more into purer channels leading towards selfless love. In this the seeker is helped by the very nature of Bhakti which whatever its original motives, apparent or real, comes into its own as it grows in his being and lands him repeatedly on high points of utter gratitude, pure love and clean aspiration, all, of which are doors of entry into the real Way of Love.

The first stage of Bhakti is that of adoration. Usually this takes the form of some kind of external worship of the adored. The devotee tends to express his feelings of submission and reverence through physical means which is natural to a mind that normally dwells in the world of the physical senses. This worship, has indeed its preparatory value. But to be truly effective in opening a way of contact and communication with the Divine who is worshipped, this outer mode of attendance must correspond to an inner feeling, a glad movement of surrender, a dependence felt within. The outer should be a means of expression, a support for growth of an inner adoration. The inner gives life to the outer.

Swami Vivekananda considers Bhakti to be the easiest and the most natural way to reach the great divine and in view; its great disadvantage is that in its lower form, it often times degenerates into hideous fanaticism. The fanatical people in Hinduism or Mohammedanism or Christianity, have always been almost exclusively recruited from these worshippers on the lower plane of Bhakti. The singleness of attachment (Nishtha) to a loved object, without which no genuine love can grow, is very often also the cause of denunciation of everything else. All the weak and undeveloped minds in every religion or country have only one way of loving their own ideal i.e. by hating every other ideal. This is why people who are devotedly attached to their own ideal of God, and religion, become howling fanatics in their dealings with other faiths.

According to Swami Vivekananda, this kind of instinct is

somewhat like the canine instinct of guarding the master's property from intrusion; only the instinct of the dog is better than the reason of man, for the dog never mistakes its master for an enemy, in whatever dresses, he may come before it. The same man who is kind good, honest and loving to people of his own opinion, will not hesitate to do the vilest deeds, when they are directed against persons beyond the pale of his own religious brotherhood.

The Scriptures of Bhakti are very liberal and declare that the path of Divine Love is open to all. The only qualification required of a Bhakta is firm faith in the grace of mercy of God and unstinted devotion and dedication to His Will. Even illiteracy is no bar, nor a previous record of a vicious life. Says the Bhagavadgita, "Even a hard-baked sinner, if he comes to have unswerving love for the Lord, must be regarded as righteous for he has decided aright. He soon becomes righteous and obtains lasting peace. Proclaim is boldly, O Arjuna, that My devotee never perishes, for those who take refuge and abide in Me—women, vaisyas, sudras, nay even those on whom their past deeds have imposed the very worst of births, attain to the highest goal.”

Sage Sandilya lays down: "Every one, to the lowest born is eligible to follow the path of devotion; this is born out by the long line of devotees; just like those virtues which for God are common to all." Sri Suka salutes the Lord thus: " I bow to the Almighty Lord, by adoring even whose devotees people like the Kiratas, Huns, Andhras, Pulindas, Pulkasas, Abhiras, Kankas,
Yavanas, Khasa, as well as those who are sinners, purify themselves."

Untouchable Saints and women saints who have done a tremendous deal of good to the spiritual uplift of the country bear witness to the catholicity to the path of devotion. More than any creed or religious path, Bhakti Movement has been the greatest leveler of caste and creed differences. It not only broke the barriers between the high and low caste people but also between the Hindus and Muslims. Bhakti (Love) and Jnana (Knowledge) are not opposed to each other. Bhakti without knowledge may degenerate into fanaticism and superstitious religion. Knowledge without Bhakti may not lead a man far beyond the intellect. "Three things are necessary for a manbird to fly: the two wings of the tail as the rudder for steering. Jnana (Knowledge) is one wing, Bhakti (Love) is the other, and Yoga is the tail which keeps up the balance. Sant Garib Das also says:

Garib aise satgur ham wilya, surt sindh ke nal,
Gyan jog or bhagat sabh dineh nazar nihal,
Garib says: I have met such a Satguru, through my mind and Spirit, that he has enlightened me with Jnana, Yoga and Bhakti through his grace.

G.G.S. P 2

"Sandilya feels the necessity of Yoga for concentration of mind and cultivation of the intellect for the culture of devotion. The cultivation of the intellect for acquiring certain knowledge of Brahman should be continued till devotion

8. Sri Bhagvat '11 4, 18
is completely purified. Valid knowledge of Brahma is the end of the intellect. It cannot be brought about by voluntary action. Still listening to the Scriptures (Sravana), reflection (manana), and intellectual conviction (nidhyasana) lead to the true knowledge of God. Knowledge is absolutely necessary for the firmness and purity of devotion (bhakti paridudhi). Thus the life of devotion to God need not necessarily be a purely emotional one. Sandaliya upholds the cult of devotion enlightened by reason."

Thus Bhakti is not mere emotional approach to God. It is fundamentally based on knowledge and charitable actions. Bhakti is also a type of Yoga in itself. Its higher practices are a synthesis of love, and spiritual union through Yoga.

The Bhakti Movement has come down to as a distinct tradition which received inspiration from the practical life of sages like Prahlad, Janaka and others. Each sage made a distinct contribution to it during the Hindu period of Indian history. During the Muslim period of Indian history it received a new type of inspiration from the Sufi Saints and the Bhaktas tried to demolish caste and other differences among Hindus to create a Unity. They also met the challenge of the iconoclastic zeal of the Muslims and asked the people to give up idolatory. This gave rise to two distinct Bhakti Movements in Indian history which we call Nirgun and Surgun Bhakti Movement.

9. Cultural Heritage of India Vol III P 150
The higher Bhakti Schools evolved out of lower stages of loving the Supreme and Infinite through personal gods and avatar-worship and reached a higher stage of strict monism. The devotees of personal God, sought Divine enlightenment through either Vishnu or through Siva. The former came to be known as the Vaishnava Bhaktas while the later came to be known as the Saiva Bhaktas.

Shaivism influenced mostly the Bhakti Schools of the South and to some extent those of Kashmir. In the South the Saiva Bhakti movement had four schools called the Das-marga, Satputramarga, Sahamarga, Satmarga i.e. the path of the servant, the path of the good son, the path of the friend and the true path. Each of these schools was founded by an acarya and they have their own long history.

Vaishnavism found its roots in Bhagvadgita, Mahabharata and the Bhagvata, Sir R.G. Bhandarkar in his Vaishnavism, Shaivism and minor religious systems, has traced the process by which the Bhagvadgita, with its worship of vasudeva Krishna, developed and was modified, other cults and other philosophical conceptions mingling with or influencing it. On the mythological side the tales of adventures of the boy Krishna with the coherdesses in particular Radha had great influence on the direction of the religious movements and it came to be an important object of worship. Later Rama came to be exalted and worshipped as God and the whole history of later Bhakti is connected with various forms that the worship of Krishna and Radha, Rama and Sita, took.

On the philosophical side the most important fact is that new interpretation of the ancient philosophical texts given
by Ramanuja, who in the eleventh century provided an intellectual foundation for Bhakti, which the monistic philosophy had done so much to undermine. "It was this influence which was most powerful in what has been called Hindu Reformation, and in the four Churches of Reformation, we have evidence of the new strength and vitality which had been imparted to the spirit of Bhakti. These Churches are known respectively as (1) Sri Sampardaya of Ramanuja (2) the Brahma Sampardaya of Madhva (3) Rudra Sampardaya of Vishnuswami (4) Sankadi Sampardaya of Nimberaka. These churches are based on different theological foundations. The first held qualified monism-Vashishtadvaita, the second a dualism on the lines of Samkhya Yoga and the third pure monism-Sudhadavaita, and the fourth is a curious blend of monism and pluralism. They held the belief in God in the same personal way."

Sir R.G. Bhandarkar has well summarised what is to be said regarding the relations of various Vaishnav Systems to each other. According to him, the points of contact between Vaishnav Systems are that their spiritual elements are essentially derived from the Bhagavadgita, that Vasudeva as the name of the Supreme Being stands in the background of all and that spiritual monism and world illusion are denounced by them all equally. The differences arise from the varied importance that they attach to the different spiritual doctrines; the prominence that they give to one or other of the three elements that were mingled with Vasudevism; the metaphysical theory that they set up; and the ceremonial that they impose upon their followers. The Bhagavadgita was supplemented in later times by the

Pancharatra Samhitas and the Puran as, such as the Vishnu and
the Bhagvata and other later works of that description. These
occasional elucidated some of the essential doctrines, laid
down the ceremonial and brought together a vast mass of legendary
matter to magnify the importance of their special teachings
and render them attractive."  

The history of Bhakti Movement shows various complicating
but inter-related trends. There are some extremely puritan
movements while others have degenerated into the wildest
licenciousness. "On the whole the most attractive forms of
Bhakti are those associated with Rama, and it is in connection
with some of the forms of worship of Radha that some of the worst
excesses have appeared. The Bhagavadgita and the works of
Ramanuja widely separated in time, are the great expressions of
Bhakti in its most reflective manifestation. They breathe a
spirit that is lofty and pure; they represent a devotion that
is emotional but restrained, and a morality that is weak on the
active and social side, but that contains elements in it of
great worth."  

The Bhaktiratnavali, a work dating 1400 A.D commands a
more purer form of Bhakti when it says: "Neither charity, nor
asceticism, nor sacrifices, nor purificatory rites, nor penance
and religious vows please him. He is pleased with pure devotion.
Everything else is futile, mere mockery."  

12. John Mackenzie: Hindu Ethics P 168
13. Bhaktiratnavali, Eng: Tr. P 26
The Bhaktiratanavli strongly emphasises on singing the Praise of the Lord, bowing to him and shampooing his feet, which are considered as means to attain the ecstatic union with the Lord. Devotion furnishes a way, indeed the only way of escape from the fruits of karma. "Just as gold heated by fire leaves off its dross and regains its own appearance, so is the human soul cleared of its karmic impurities by the application of devotion and attains to me (by regaining the purity that is mine.)

The Muslim invasion, the rise of the reformist movements and role of the Bhaktas of low caste origin and other social and cultural needs of the times, compelled the Saints of the thirteenth century or perhaps even earlier to turn away from all worship of personal gods, to give up personal piety and search for Truth and enlightenment in the grace and pure Love of the Supreme God. Some of these Bhaktas were idol worshippers in their earlier life but in their later life they gave up all idolatry and sought union with the Supreme Being. This school of thought came to be known as Nirgun School of thought. It was strongly influenced in its metaphysical outlook by the Nathpanthi Yogis, the Sufis and Muslim Saints and the Advaitists.

Dr. Pitambardat Badthwal in his Nirgun School of Hindi poetry and Dr. Prabhakar Machme in his "Hindi and Marathi ka Nirgun Sant Kavya" show the strong influence of Nathpanthi Yogis on Nirgun School of poetry. Dr. Hazari Prasad Dwedi also in his "Kabir" reveals the influence of the mystic thoughts of the Nathpanthi Yogis on Kabir. A number of mystic terms and experiences seem to have been borrowed from them.

14. Bhaktarathavali (English translation) P 38
Dr. Trilochan Singh says: "The higher spiritual and social experiences of Jaldev, Namdev and Ramananda brought a strong revolution in their minds. Their fresh experiences compelled them to break away from the purely sargun approach to Bhakti and give up idolatry and formal ceremonies and worship connected with it. They moulded their thoughts and feelings in the Nirgun philosophy and mysticism. The early thoughts and experiences of these Bhaktas were first rays of such great Lights as radiated by the sun of Guru Nanak's philosophy. A part of the life of these early Bhaktas was spent in Sargun Worship while it ended in Nirgun worship. The sikh Gurus rejected the first part and accepted their thoughts of the Nirgun period. Then we have the Bhaktas like Kabir who were initiated into the Nirgun Bhakti alone and all their life opposed Sargun worship of God, by condemning idolatry and worship of avatars as God, which was common in Krishna and Rama cult."

The main features of Nirgun School of Bhakti are:
1. Metaphysics is subordinated to mysticism. The highest principles determined by pure reason are to be apprehended by mystic experiences.
2. God is regarded by them as real and all else is His creation and therefore relatively real but transitory.
3. The Nirgun Bhakti School considered the Guru or the Satguru as perfect as God Himself, but not an avatar of God. The Satguru is the source of all the inspiration.
4. They lay much stress on the grace of God, but the grace of

15. Dr. Trilochan Singh: Bhakti and Gurmat "Punjabi Duniya 1965
God depends upon moral and virtuous living.

5. They rose above all caste prejudices and even had Muslims as their disciples.

6. They completely gave up idolatory and image worship and respected the Bani of the Saints as the Word of God.

7. They tried to form a cultural bridge between the Hindus and Muslims, the high caste and the low caste people.

III

IMPACT OF ISLAM ON BHAKTI MOVEMENT

The forces of Islam, one quite distinct from the other, entered India in the 13th Century and proved a shocking challenge to Hindu Religion, Society and Culture. Various Schools of Sufis, particularly the Chisti and the Suhrawardy came to India, with a new message of mystic faith and won innumerable converts to Islam. The simple, selfless and dedicated life of the Sufi Saints attracted thousands of people to the new faith.

Caste, idolatory and esoteric obscurantism were the three baneful aspects of Hinduism that had been ruthlessly attacked by the protagonists of Islam, which itself was non-idolatrous, simple and democratic creed that observed no distinctions of caste or race. The Bhakti reform movement was therefore marked by attempts at reforms in this very direction. "Firstly, by preaching and practise they denounced the Brahmanical caste exclusiveness; secondly, though some of them inculcated Bhakti in which idols found an important place, they emphasised the unity of God and the true spirit of religion as distinguished from mere idolatory; and thirdly, they appealed to the hearts of the people by singing to them mostly in the language of the masses, as against the esoteric Sanskrit Brahminical Schools."

16. Shri Ram Sharma. The Crescent in India P 240
The coming of Muslims to India inaugurated a period of earnest spiritual consciousness among both Hindus and Muslims. Hinduism and Islam, both bound by the strict tenets of their scriptures, had no points of contact with each other. They were like the two banks of a river ever separated by the stream that ever flows between them. Who was to build the connecting bridge? The Orthodox Hindus and the Orthodox Muslims were unfit for the task, and it was left to free spirits and lovers of humanity, from both these groups, the Hindus Bhaktas and the Muslim Sufis to devote their lives to construct this bridge.

"The main contribution of Islam to the mental make up of the Indian Muslims" says Prof. Hamayun Kabir, have been the insistence on a militant democracy, liberal rationalism in practical conduct, and an uncompromising monotheism, that at times, verged on iconoclasty and intolerance. It is generally contribution to world culture. In theory every religion recognises the principles of fatherhood of God and brotherhood of man. In practice however the fatherhood of God often remains an article of faith divorced from the realities of life. Clash of colour and inequalities of birth, station, and wealth make the brotherhood of man a mere ideal unrelated to the daily activities of life. Even its worst enemies, have however, admitted that Islam broke down the barriers of colour and birth absolutely in the formal act of worship and with negligible restrictions in daily social intercourse." Thus Islam has contributed greatly to the cause of removing Idolatry, superstition, and removing caste prejudices. The intense monotheism of Islam made the people understand that all people are equal in the eyes of God.

The Muslim Saints followed wherever the Muslim Army led or the traders settled. In the 9th Century Abu Mafiz Rabi who was traditionalist and an ascetic came to Sindh where he died in 106 A.H. In the 10th Century Mansur al Hallaj made a voyage to India by sea, and went back overland by way of Northern India and Turkistan. After the invasion of Mahmud, numerous Muslim men of learning and religion poured into India. It is impossible to compile a list of all of them, but some of the important ones may be mentioned here. Among them was Al Hujwiri, the author of Keshful Mahjub who was a native of Ghagna, and who after travelling extensively over Muslim lands came to reside in Lahore where he died in 465 or 469 A.H. Khwaja Muin Ud-Din Chisti came to Ajmer in 1197 A.D. and died there in 1234 A.D. Sheikh Jalal-ud-din Tabrizi a pupil of Shihabu-din Suhrwardi visited Bengal. Mian Mir of the Qadri order was another saint who had a strong influence on the Saints and Punjab and Punjabi Culture. Chisti Saints like Bakhtayar Keki, Sheikh Farid, Nizamu-din Auliya had a tremendous effect on the thoughts and culture of the Punjab. There were thus men of high rank in Muslim religious biography—undoubtedly along with them a host of others of less renown who lived and laboured in India and through their personal contacts and influence spread the ideas of Islamic Philosophy and mysticism through the length and breadth of India.

"Indian Philosophy says Hamayun Kabir, has always emphasised the wholeness of life and brought with it an attitude of tolerance and forbearance. Indian Muslim were influenced by

19. ibid.
this spirit of catholicity of the traditions of ancient India. It is significant that the attempts of at rapprochement between Islam and Hinduism were as strong from the Muslim side as from that of the Hindus. Just as the teachings of Ramananda, Nanak, and Chaitanya, tended to narrow the distinction between Hinduism and Islam, there were also Kabir, Chishti, and Dara Shikoh who attempted an understanding and unification of the two faiths from the side of the Muslims. Nor must it be forgotten that, though orthodoxy looked askance, one of the supreme architect of this movement for synthesis was Akbar the Great."

IV

SANTS (SAINTS) AND SANT PARAMPRA IN NORTHERN INDIA.

The word Sant now-a-days simply means a Saint. It is also used as a substitute for a Bhakta. In the Adi Granth and old Manuscripts Saints like Kabir are called Bhakta Kabir. Their biographies are called Bhaktamalas. Many scholars derive the word Sant, from the word 'Sat'. Dr. Trilochan Singh believes that the word is derived from the Sanskrit word: "Santri" which means to cross over, traverse to get over, to surmount, to escape from, to be saved. In Pali writings it is used with the sense of Shanti: peace of mind. Parusram Chaturvedi thinks that it is derived from the Sanskrit word "San" which means sitting down, lying low, dejected. It is said to be the plural of the word "San" but the objection is that the word Sant is always used as singular in Hindi and Punjabi languages.

In the Srimad Bhagwat, Lord Krishna says: Knowledge,

20. Dr. Parusram Chaturvedi, Uttri Bharat Ki Sant Parampara P4-5
sacrifices, repetition of mantras, going to places of pilgrimages and virtuous deeds are helpful to man, but the great help in spiritual enlightenment comes from association with Saints. The Indian people believe that saints are perfect men. They are as generous as the clouds. They fulfil all aspirations of those who commit themselves to their care. They are free from greed and selfishness. Even in dire difficulty they remember God. They are softer than wax and firmer than rocks." The whole world is a home to them and they have no enemies. Enlightened Saints can confer a vision on their deserving disciples.

Guru Arjan in Sukhmani writes:

In the company of the Saints,
The mind hankereth not wildly?
In the company of the Saints
The soul attainedth to happiness,
In the company of Saints
Man sees the Invisible;
In company of the Saints
He endureth the undurable;
In the company of the Saints
We reach the heights of Spirit.
In the company of the Saints
We enter the Lord's Presence;
In the company of the Saints
We are aware only of God.

The Saints are born in the world only to teach the people right conduct and how to establish the Kingdom of God on earth. The one purpose of a Saint's life is to protect dharma and

suppress atheism. They clean the mind of the people and fill them with divine joy.

Writing on "Saints and Saintliness," Dr. Trilochan Singh says: "All the current achievements for social justice, human principles and comprehension of economic problems are in the last analysis heritage entrusted to us by the past that was steeped in religion. We are only striving to preserve and develop the values handed down to us by the Saints of the past. The Saints were the first to proclaim humanitarian ideals, the first to fight for social justice, the first champions of the poor. They considered all nations and races equal. Their horizon was indeed global. They were the first liberators of slaves and the first to fight against the perpetuation of caste and creed. They believed in the equality of the sexes. The soul of the Saint yearns to become an instrument of God. The true Saint feels truth flowing into his soul from its fountain heads like an active force. He can no more help spreading it abroad than the sun can help diffusing its light. Only its is not by mere words that he will spread it. The love that consumes him is no longer the love of man for God. It is the love of God for all men. Through God, in the strength of God, he loves all mankind with divine love." Saints have thus been the most important forces in the history of India. They have brought about great social, cultural and political changes in our society.

"Deep wisdom and boundless love are the characteristics of a Saint. The Janai sees only the unity in the diversity of the world and so feels himself one with the whole creation, and the bhakta radiates a peace-active and exalted which silently and gently communicates itself to others, transforming many lives and

lightening hearts that are heavy laden with sorrows and cares of the world. The Saints have thus built our literature and philosophy which is the pride of the land.

The Sufi Mystic Rumi has rightly expressed: "One instant in the company of the Saints is better than a hundred years of prayer." In a beautiful Mathnavi Poet Rumi describes the greatness of the Saint as follows:

There is a Water that flows down from Heaven To cleanse the world of sin by grace Divine; At last, its whole stock spent, its virtues gone, Dark with pollution not its own, it speeds Back to the fountain of all purities; Whence, freshly bathed, earthward it sweeps again, Trailing a robe of glory bright and pure.

This Water is the Spirit of the Saints, Which ever sheds, until itself is beggared, God's balm on the sick soul, and then returns to Him who made the purest light of Heaven. 25

The Saint, as we understand him here is essentially a man or woman of heroic virtues, due, we hold, to a most intimate union with God. It has been thus admitted not only in Indian thought but in Semitic thoughts also that a Saint has been the source of great inspiration. He can change and mould the mind of individuals and society. "It is not true to say that the saint has turned his back to the world. He is the only one who has access to the depth of life, in the world. Far from vanishing like a dream the world reveals to him the deep foundation on which it rests. For him, it reflects the face of God. For those who look on the world with physical eyes only it means nothing. But the saint realizes that from Him proceeds the power to greet all things with the glance of love. Because the saint is absorbed

24. Cultural Heritage of India Vol IV p 359
25. Rumi Poet and Mystic by Reynolds and Nicholson. p 44
in God, he alone is capable of seeing God and appreciating created things. Because he loves God he alone is capable of loving everybody. For the Saint, the world has no dark side, because even what seems darkest he brings into the full light of the day."

Thus we conclude that in India a Saint is expected to possess the following qualities:

1. He is essentially a man of God.
2. He is devoted to Truth and service of humanity.
3. He is fearless and having renounced all worldly desires is always prepared to sacrifice his life for righteousness.
4. Saints in India have aspired after complete spiritual union with God, and that is why they have been considered one with God.
5. Saints are true liberators of humanity. They fight for dharma in social, religious, cultural and political field.
6. The company of the Saints is morally elevating and spiritually exalting.

Sant Garib Das holds the Saint in very high esteem. He sometimes identifies a Saint not only with the Satguru but also with God. For him the spirit of the Saint and the spirit of God is the same. We give below some quotations from the writings of Garib Das explaining his views on a "Sant" which he addresses also as Bhakta and Sadh.

(1) Sant sarovar hans hai bachan kare bicar
Puhap bains jion rabain rai rinc na bhar
G.G.S. P 120

The Saints are the Swans on the Mansarover lake,
They take the pearls of wisdom;
They live like fragrance in a flower,
Which is not of the slightest burden.

26. Dr. Trilochan Singh; Saints and Saintliness; Sikh Review May, 1957.
(2) Sadh sangat Hari Bhagat bin koi na pavai par,
nirmal adi anadi hai ganda sabh sansar.

No one can cross the ocean
Without the aid of the Saints
They are ever and ever pure,
The whole world is full of dirt.

(3) Sadh sadh sabh kou kahai, sadh samundar tir,
abgat ki gat ko lakhai mil gae nir kabir.

Every one claims to be a Saint,
A real Saint is like a sea shore
They lose themselves in the infinite Ocean,
As Kabir merged in the Divine life.

(4) Sadh kahavan kathin hai mag par dhare na panv
sohngi sangat hai nahi cadho nam ki nav.

It is difficult to call one self a Saint
It is better not to set foot on this path
It is not easy to get association of the Saint
Ride the boat of God's Name.

(5) Sain sarikhe sant hain yamai min na mekh
par da ang anadi hai bahar bhitar ek.

The Saints are the embodiments of God
There is no difference between them
Within and without they are the same,
There is a thin veil separating them.

(6) Mehma kijai sant ki tan man dhan sabh deh
sir mange tala nahi mordhajh lakh leh

Always praise the saints and serve them
With the body mind and wealth.
If the Saint wants your head do not hesitate to give it
As MordhvaJ offered it when Krishna came to him in disguise.

(7) Thus according to Garib Das the Saint is a treasure
of wisdom. He is one with the spirit of God. Service of the
saint is the service of God.

V

Jaidev, Ramananda and Namdev.

The Nirgun Sant Parampara to which Garib Das belongs can be
traced to Jaidev, Ramananda and Namdev. These are the great names
mentioned also in the writings of Kabir and the Sikh Gurus. These are also mentioned in the writings of Garib Das. They are generally associated the Vaishnavism of the 13th and 14th centuries.

Jaideo Nama bip Sudama tin ko kirpa bhai hai apar.

Jaidev and Namdev, so also Sudama have received boundless grace from the Lord. Rag Bilawal p 856

Kabir

Dhanna sevia bal budh,
Trilochan gur mil bhai sidh
Bani ko gur kio pragas,
re man tu bhi ho das;
Jaidev tyagio ahmmev,
nai udhrio Saint sev
Kabir dhy aio ek rang,
Namdev Harjio baseh sang

Ravdas dhyae prabh anup
Guru Nanak gobind rup

Rag Basant Adi Granth.

Guru Arjan

Dhanna served God with innocence of a Child;
Trilochan became perfect after meeting the Guru;
Beni was given enlightenment by his Guru;
O mind, you should also serve like a servant;
Jaidev gave up all egolism,
Sain the barbar was also saved.
Kabir worshipped with single-minded devotion.
Namdev lived in union with the Lord;
Ravidas worshipped the Ineffable One.
Guru Nanak is an embodiment of His spirit.

There are three stages in the development of the Nirgun movement:

(1) Those Bhaktas who in their early life believed in idolatry and image worship but in the light of later experiences they gave up all sargun Bhakti and strictly preached the ideas of Nirgun Bhakti. We may place Jaidev, Ramananda Namdev and Dhanna in this category (2) Those Bhaktas who were initiated into Nirgun Bhakti from the very early period and devoted all their lives

27. Rag Bilawal Adi Granth P 856
to Nirgun Bhakti. In this category we can place, Kabir and other disciples of Ramananda, Disciples of Namdev like Trilochan and later Kabir Panthis (like Dadu and others)

(3) The Sikh Movement also had social and political foundations. Ramananda the founder of this great movement in North India was fifth in descent from Ramanuja. He was born at Prayag in a Brahmin family. He was not a founder in the sense that he started the movement, the work had already begun before he was born. But from his time onward, we can trace an uninterrupted flow of this stream of thought throughout the Indian middle ages. His unique contribution to Indian spiritual life was the spirit of synthesis observed in his teachings: he accepted all that was true and of permanent value in our spiritual heritage- the philosophy of meditation (Yoga) and knowledge from the North and absolute surrender (Prapatti) of the Bhakti cult from the South- and rejected all that was untrue, ephemeral or rigidly sectarian. There is a popular verse to this effect; Bhakti arose in the Dravide land; Ramananda brought it to the North; and Kabir agreed it to the seven continents and nine divisions of the world."

Ramananda borrowed ideas from all the important religious schools and vitalised them with the love and devotion of his heart and founded a new spiritual path of spiritual realisation. We do not come across many of his sayings but the radiant personality of his disciples- the men he created constitutes his living message. We come across only one song of his, incorporated in the Adi Granth but this single poem is sufficient indication of his philosophy.

28. Medieval Mystics of North India by Kahti Mohan Sen
Cultural Heritage of India Vol: III p 378
29. Ibid p 379
Whither need I go to seek holiness?
I am happy here within myself at home
My heart is no longer a pilgrim
It has become tied down to itself.

Restlessly one day I did want to go,
I prepared sandalwood paste,
Distilled aloe wood and many perfumes;
I set out towards a temple to worship,
Then my Guru showed me God in my heart.

Whatever holy places I seek as pilgrim,
All I find is worship of water and stones;
But Thou Lord, equally pervadeth all things,
I have studied all Vedas and Puranas,
There or elsewhere thou sayest, seek God.
If God is not here in my heart.

"Thus Ramananda was the Bridge between the Bhakti Movement of the South and North, Ramananda's teachings gave rise to two schools of thought, one conservative, and the other radical. The first remained true and ancient beliefs and allowed only slight changes in doctrine and rites; the other struck out a more independent path and attempted to create a religion acceptable to men of different creeds—especially Hindus and Muslims. The greatest name in the first class is that of Tulsidass and in the second that of Kabir."

Namdev was born at Narsi Bamni in 1269 A.D. and was a near contemporary of Ramananda. A tailor by profession, he turned to the religious life when still quite young. He has close associations with the famous ascetic scholar Gyan Deva and the poetess Janabai. He was imprisoned by Sultan Mohammed Tughlaq but he refused to give up his faith. He was set free when the Sultan was convinced of his spiritual greatness. Namdev spent about ten years in the Punjab. He died at Pundarpur. There are 60 hymns of Namdeva in Adi Guru Granth

30. Sacred Writings of the Sikhs p.233
and innumerable Abhangas in Marathi, many of which are autobiographical.

If I should bring milk
And cook rice in it
To feed the idol,
The calf has already
Made the milk impure
By testing of it
Why to his image
Need I offer Milk?

God is with us here
God is beyond us there,
In no place is God not;
Na ma bows to the Omipresent
Who filleth the whole earth. 32
Adi Granth P 485

The above hymn of Namdev shows that Namdev had completely
given up idolatry and image worship, though in his early life
he worshipped the idol of vithal.

In the poetry of Garib Das of Rohtak we find reference to
Jaidev, Ramananda and Namdev showing thereby that he actively and
ideologically associated himself with these great saints of the
Nirgun school. Refering to the story of how Jaidev forgave the
thugs who cheated Jaidev. Garib Das writes:

Garib Jaidev Ku adar kia, Thag bithas pas,
Kare adhini bandgi be thug bhae usas,
Garib raja se Jaidev Kahe eh doe mitar hamar
inki puja kijie le apna janam sudhar.

Jaidev showed great respect to the thugs and seated
them by his side. He showed great humility and
reverence to the thugs which made the thugs sad.
Garib Das introduced the thugs as his friends
and asked the Raja to show them the respect
due to a saint. G.G.S. B 259

Refering to Ramananda, Garib Das writes:

Garib Ramanand se Ikhsh guru, tare shish ke bhae
celon ki ginti nahi, pad me rahe samai.

Guru Ramanada initiated so many disciples and created so many

32. Sacred writings of the sikhs. P 224
Gurus that they cannot be counted. They all were devoted to his feet. Garib Das also refers to Namdev and other disciples of Ramanand in various places of his Granth:

Deval phara gop gusain, Nama chan chavaia,
Chan chwai gou jival Ganika Cadhi biban me,
Sadhna bakre kun mat mare pahunce an niden me,
Dhanan Bhakt ke khet nipaya madho dei siklat hai
Pipa to darya mai kudal aisa nisca kahiai;

Quietly the Lord turned the temple doors towards Namdev who had been turned out of it; God also built a beautiful house for Namdev, and the prostitute was liberated by the killing of goats. God helped Dhanna in the measurement of his land and Madho was given a blanket when during illness he was left on the river side. Pipa jumped into the river when his faith was put to test. Such should be the determined faith of Bhakta.

Thus Garib Das refers quite frequently to these saints of Nirgun School showing that he derived quite a good deal of inspiration from them.

VI

KABIR AND KABIR PANTHIS

Of all the saints to whom Garib Das owed much and whom he acknowledges as his Guru also, is the famous saint Kabir. Legend surrounds his early life and struggle. As we are dealing with the impact of this saint on Garib Das in separate chapter, it is sufficient to say here that "the mission of Kabir was to preach a religion of love which would unite all castes and creeds. He rejected those features of Hinduism and Islam which were against this spirit, and which were of no importance for the real spiritual welfare of the individual. He selected from both religions their common and philosophical ideas, their dogmas and ritual. He used
both Sanskrit and Persian terms and both forms of the Vernacular, Rekhta and Hindi Bhasha. He placed the greatest value upon the inwardness of religion and impartially condemned the external formalism of both. He deliberately abandoned the division between the two faiths and taught a middle path. "A great religious reformer, the founder of a sect to which nearly millions northern Hindus still belong, it is yet supremely as a mystic poet that Kabir lives for us. His fate has been that of many revealers of Reality. A hater of religious exclusivism, and seeking above all things to initiate men into liberty of the children of God his followers have honoured his memory by re-erecting in a new place the barriers which he laboured to cast down. But his wonderful Songs survive, the spontaneous expressions of his vision and his love; and it is by these, not by the didactic teachings associated with his name, that he makes his immortal appeal to the heart.

In these poems a wide range of mystical emotion brought into play; from the loftiest abstractions, the most other-worldly passions for the infinite, to the most intimate and personal realization of God, expressed in homely metaphors and religious symbols drawn indifferently from Hindu and Mohammedan belief. "He is," as he himself says" atonce a child of Allah and Ram. The Supreme Spirit whom he knew and adroed and to whose joyous friendship he sought to whom he knew and adroed and to whose joyous friendship he sought to induct the souls of other men, transcended whilst He included all metaphysical categories all credal definitions; yet each contributed something to the description of that infinite and Simple Totality who revealed Himself, according to their measure to the faithful

33. Influence of Islam on Indian Culture by Dr. Tara Chand p 150
lovers of all creeds."

About his own initiation from Ramananda he says:

I became suddenly revealed in Benares and Ramananda illumined me;

I brought with me the thirst for the Infinite and I have come for the meeting with Him.

In simplicity will I unite with the Simple one; my love will surge up.

And then again he makes clear his fundamental approach to religion which strongly influenced Garib Das, by saying:

If God be within the mosque, then to whom does this world belong?

If Ram be within the image, which you find upon your pilgrimage, then who is there to know what happens without.

Hari is in the East; Allah is in the West; Look within your heart, for there you will find both Karim and Ram.

All the men and women of the world are his living forms.

Kabir is the child of Allah and of Ram; He is my Guru. He is my Pir. 35

And rightly does Evelyn Underhill remarks: "Last, the warmly human and direct apprehension of God as the supreme object of love, the soul's comrade, teacher and bridgegroom, which is so passionately and frequently expressed in Kabir's poems, balance and controls these abstract tendencies which are inherent in the metaphysical side of his vision of Reality; and prevents it from degenerating into the sterile worship of intellectual formulae which became the cause of the Vedantist school".

34. Poems of Kabir by Rabindranath Tagore: Introduction viii and ix
35. Poems of Kabir by Rabindranath Tagore p 72
36. ibid p XXIX and XXX
Kabir's was the first attempt to reconcile Hinduism and Islam; the teachers of the south had absorbed Muslim elements but Kabir was the first to come forward boldly to proclaim a religion of the centre, middle path and his cry was taken up all over India and was re-echoed from hundred places. He had numerous Hindu and Muslim disciples and today his sect numbers a million. Garib Das has made innumerable references to the life and spiritual greatness of Kabir which we will discuss in his life and the chapter dealing with Kabir's influence on Garib Das.

There is sufficient historical evidence to show that the influence of Kabir came to inspire Garib Das through Dadupanthi disciples of Kabir. Dadu was born in Ahmedabad and died at Narana, where his followers living in Rajasthan have made their chief centre. "The great dream of his life was to unite all the divergent faiths in a bond of love and comradeship, and he founded the Brahm Samparadaya or the Parabrahm Samparadaya, to give effect to this great ideal. His sayings possess great depth and liberality and show clear traces of the influence of Kabir. Dadu believed not in the authority of the Scriptures, but in the value of self-realization. To attain the realization we must divert ourselves of all sense of the ego and surrender our lives entirely to God. All men and women are brothers and sisters in the presence of God. He resides within the hearts of man, and it is there that we must meditate on him. Union with God is possible only through love and devotion and it is deepened not by prayers but by joining our service of the universe. We are united with God when, shedding all sins and impurities we sincerely surrender ourselves to the divine

37. Influence of Islam on Indian Culture. 165
will. Garib Das referring to Dadu and Guru Nanak says:

\[
\text{Nanak Dadu agam aghadhu ttit jahaj khevut sahi} \\
\text{Sukh sagar ke hansa ae bhkat hirambr ur dhari.}
\]

Infinite and Profound were Nanak and Dadu. They are the Swans of the sea of happiness. They instill the love of God in the heart.

VII

Sikh Gurus and their Influence.

Garib Das was a near contemporary of the Sikh Gurus. The Sikh Gurus not only preached Bhakti but applied it actively to social, cultural, and political forces of the land. They used it not only to teach the love of God but to win social and political freedom of the country and combine religion with a practical approach to all human problems.

"The mission of Nanak was the unification of the Hindus and the Muslims. He realised that in order to heal the wounds of society it was essential to end the conflict of religions. He regarded himself as a prophet of God, who had come from the divine court and received from his door step the signs (Aitân), the chapters (Surahs) and the traditions (nadîth) of the prophet. He taught that there is one God in the world and no other and that Nanak and the Caliph (or son) of God speaks the truth.

"The Sikh, "says Duneon Greenless," is not a Hindu or a Muslim; he is the disciple of the one Eternal Guru of the world and all who learn of Him are truely sikhs and must not corrupt His teachings with confused utterances of men who, live among them and around.

38. Kahiti Mohan Sen: Medieval Mysticism in North India. p 384
39. Influence of Islam on Indian Culture by Tara Chand p 168

History of Sikh Philosophy by Khazan Singh. Vol II p 348
Sikhism is not disguised Hindu sect, but an independent revelation of the Truth of all sects; it is no variant of Muslim teachings save in that it too proclaims the love of God and the need for men to hold Him always in their heart. It too is a distinct religion like the other great religions of the World.

Prof. Toynbee says: "The Indian and Judaic religions are notoriously different in spirit and where they have met, they have sometimes behaved like oil and vinegar. Their principal meeting ground has been India, where Islam has impinged on Hinduism violently. On the whole the story of the relations between these two great religions on Indian ground has been an unhappy tale of mutual misunderstanding and hostility. Yet on both sides of this religious barrier, there has been a minority of discerning spirits who have seen that at the bottom, Hinduism and Islam are such an expression of the same fundamental truth and that these two expressions are therefore reconcilable with each other and are of supreme value when brought in harmony. The sikh Religion might be described, not accurately, as a vision of this Hindu-Muslim common ground; To have discovered and embraced the deep harmony underlying the historic Hindu Muslim discord has been a noble spiritual triumph; and sikh may well be proud of their religious ethos and origin."

Thus we note that the Sikh Gurus tried to place themselves outside the fold of Hinduism and Islam as a result of which their writings

40. The Gospal of the Guru Granth by Duncan Greenlees. p 260
41. Arnold Toynbee. Foreword to sacred writings of Sikhs p.10
exercised great influence on the Hindu Bhaktas and Sufis of Punjab. While we are devoting a complete chapter to the study the influence of Sikhism on Garib Das, the following factors are notable:

1. Like the Sikh Gurus Garib Das led a house-holders life.
2. Like them he criticised the formalism and dogmatism of both the Hindus and Muslims.
3. Like them he tried to synthesise Hinduism and Islam.
4. The influence of the language of Adi Granth and of Punjabi language is quite a marked one.

We shall see in subsequent chapters that the lives, the language, the thoughts and religious institutions of the sikhs had a tremendous influence on Garib Das.

VIII

Garib Das' Place in the Sant Parampara.

Garib Das of Rohtak, the subject of our thesis, belonged to the Nirgun school of religious idealists, who discarded idolatory and formal Hindu practices almost completely. Although his disciples claim him to be an Avatar of Kabir. He did not go to the extent of saying as Kabir and Guru Nanak did that he was neither a Hindu nor a Muslim. He maintained a contact with the Hindu traditions and practices of non-violence, vegetarianism, Cow-worship and few other practices common to progressive Vaishnavs. But Garib Das did maintain that Hindus and Muslims were equal in the eyes of God and the Name of Allah and Ram did not make any difference to God who looked on His creatures as His own creation.

Garib Das treated all castes and creeds as equal but he did not oppose Brahmanism so vehemently as did Kabir or Guru Nanak. Garib Das had some Muslim disciples also, but they were more of admirers than actual initiated disciples.

Like the saints of Nirgun school Garib Das did not
believe in avatar worship, or the worship of God manifest in the form of Rama or Krishna. He appears to have accepted the ethical influence of the Ramayana, the Bhagvata and the Mahabharata but not the creeds of Rama and Krishna cult. In his writings he shows respect for all leading saints of the Nirgun school of thought but rarely mentions others. He consciously deemed it his mission to be the torch bearer of the Bhakti movement started by saints of the sant parampara, Garib Das showed the following prominent qualities for which he was universally respected, and loved.

(1) Like Kabir and Guru Nanak he emphasised on sincere practice as the essence of true religion. He hated and condemned hypocrisy of all types.

(2) Like all medieval saints he preached in the language of the people and his vast collections of poetry is in the simplest language which can be easily understood in Punjab, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar.

(3) He gave up idolatory, image worship, going to pilgrimages as means of salvation. He also gave up all formal worship of avatars as the manifestation of God Himself.

(4) He was actually aware of the moral degradation of the times. His sensitive soul reacted to it in the same way as that of any other saint. He did not run away from society. He lived in the heart of society like other householders and had sons and daughters. He propagated the love of God and Truth among the masses.

(5) Like the enlightened medieval saints he shunned riches and people of the upper strata. He identifies himself with the humblest peasant of Haryana Prant and led a very simple and exemplary holy life. He always tried to impress by precept and example that the chief aim of a Saint's life should be to love...
and instil affection in the heart of the people.

(6) Like the Saint Poets of Medieval India, Garib Das enriched the religious literature of his country produced in the regional languages of the land of his birth. The thoughts and culture of Hirayana Prant as well as the rest of India are fully reflected in the language and thoughts of this Saint.