CHAPTER VIII
(Growth of Gurmat Sangeet)

Guru Nanak was the founder of Gurmat Sangeet tradition. He revived the original Vedic and spiritual aspects of Indian music. By bringing together the Desi and the Naarone traditions, he brought into existence a new tradition. He started the Kirtan tradition in which the Gurbani was recited on the basis of ragas and the time theory of Indian music. Participation of the audience in the singing assumed a lively choric tradition. During his Uswais (travels) Guru Nanak preached through the medium of music. In the later years, he settled at Kartarpur and did kirtan in the morning and the evening, hours, thus establishing the first Gurbani Kirtan Centre there. Later Gurus continued to follow the tradition preserving its fundamentals. Bhai Mardana was one of the Chief proponents of Guru Nanak's music tradition.

Bhai Mardana

Bhai Mardana (1499-1534 AD) was the closest follower of Guru Nanak Dev Jee. He remained with the Guru for a very long period. Their attachment with each other was mutual and based on faith. They were united under the force of spiritual, intellectual and the aesthetic sense. Bhai Mardana was born in 1499 as stated by Bhai Kahan Singh in his Nahan Kosh.284 He left

for his heavenly abode in 1534 at the ripe age of seventyfive. It means, Mardana was older than Guru Nanak Dev by ten years. In his Janam Sakhi, Manohar Dass Moharban has traced Talwandi as the birthplace of Bhai Mardana. According to the Janam Sakhi of Bhai Bala also, Mardana has been quoted as an inhabitant of Talwandi. The depiction of Bhai Mardana in the Janam Sakhi as a hungry, thirsty, coward, greedy and a tired fellow - traveller of Guru Nanak is quite absurd. Being a Muslim musician in the age of Muslim domination, his company with a Hindu Saint is a daring example of his boldness and bravery. He remained Guru Joe's ardent rababi throughout the period in which Muslim Shariat had never allowed singing or the Raga. Mardana accompanied Guru Nanak Dev at Muslim spiritual concerts with rabab. When Guru Joe used to sing Shabads, a realm of peace and calmness was created. One may wonder how the Muslim authorities and officials could tolerate this act of Mardana.

Mardana was really fearless, daring and Guru Joe's obedient follower. He attained great perfection and maturity in music. He had a high sense of music and was through and through skilled in his art. Two shalokas of Bhai Mardana in the raga Bihagara have also been included in Sri Guru Granth Sahib. Bhai Mardana was an esteemed and eminent Sangeet Acharya of Sikh Sangeet traditions.

set forth by the first great Guru. Even after his death, his son named Sajjaed kept the flame of music burning in the service of music in Guru Nanak Dev's congregations at Talwandi. Bhai Nardana's second son named Rajada performed similar service at Kartarpur. He remained there till his death.

Guru Angad Dev Jee (1504-1552 A.D.)

An authority on music and a patron of musicians, lived at Khdoor Sahib. In his attendance, he had two master-musicians, Satto and Balmanda, through whose efforts, the Guru's abode became the second Centre of Gurbani based on the fundamentals of tradition instituted by Guru Nanak Dev. Bhai Deepsa, Bhai Poolsa and Bhai Narain Dasa were the master Kirtankar of this period.

Guru Amar Dasa (1479-1574 A.D.)

Residing at Goindwal, Guru Amar Dasa was also a lover of music. He invented a stringed instrument called Namta and composed his entire bani in Namta. Thus the place became a prominent centre for Gurbani preaching. Bhai Pandaha, Bhai Ugarasain, Negauri Mal (belonged to Dlla) and Bhai Boodha Jee, Ketha Nangal also belong to the same period.

Guru Arjun Dev Jee (1563-1606 A.D.)

He was a great musician. Till his days, the Kirtankars

286. Tara Singh, Prof., Vadan Kala op. cit., p. 276.
were from the Mirasi or Deena castes, to which Satia and Balwanda also belonged. These singers were called rabbabia or Maranaka. Bhai Jhandu, Miranda, & Kidara are some other names which are worth mentioning. For some reasons, Satia and Balwanda ceased to do Kirtan. The Guru trained regia from the congregation to take their place, thus starting the tradition of Sikh-regia. There came into being the being of two classes of Kirtan-kara; the rabbabia and the Sikh-Kirtankar.

Bhai Gurdas Bhatta - (Maternal Uncle of Guru Arjun Dev Jee) and the editor of the Holy Granth, was the first Sikh Kirtankar. He began reciting Gurbani at the Harimandir Sahib, Amritsar, the Sikh sacrosanct-supreme in the Holy City.

Guru Harobind Sahib (1595-1644 A.D.)

He was a connoisseur of music, had Bhai Babak, Bhai Chhabila, Bhai Abdulla, Bhai Benwali and Fares Ram in his attendance to recite Gaia-Vair and extol the heroes in through Veera. The Guru set a centre of Gurbani at Kiratpur, where he spent his last days of life. Dhadi Tradition also came in vogue during his time. He initiated the tradition of reciting poems imbued with heroic fervour, from the highest seat of temporal power of the Sikh religion, Sri Akal Takhat.

Guru Gobind Singh (1664-1706)

Guru Gobind Singh enjoys a prominent place in the Gurnat Sangat tradition. Despite his being busy with numerous battles, he devoted his time and energies to music.

287. Paintal, Ajit Singh, The place of music in Sikh religion--.- op.cit., P.
and literary activities. He had a large number of poets and musicians in his court. He himself was a literature-patron per excellence and a connoisseur of music. Anandpur Sahib was the centre of his activities, which consequently developed into a centre for Gurbani propagation. Guru Gobind Singh was the last Sikh Guru in mortal form. The later Sikhs had to face heavy odds at most of the times, yet the practice of Gurbani recitation at all the major religious centres i.e. Takhats and Darbar Sahib, Amritsar, continues till today.

Bhai Sham Singh was the first Raagi appointed to do Kirtan (devotional singing accompanied with musical instruments) at Harimandir Sahib, Amritsar. His accompaniment was a stringed musical instrument (Sirenda). He served there for a long period of seventy-two years. His successor Baba Deep Singh followed in his footsteps. Bhai Uttam Singh, an uncle of Bhai Sunder Singh, continued the tradition. Bhai Uttam Singh trained Pandit Daleep Chander Bedi who is at present a renowned scholar of music.

The traditional Kirtankars used stringed instruments. A few other names worth mentioning are Bhai Shor Singh Gujranwala, Bhai Samund Singh Nankana Sahib Wale, Bhai Hira Singh, Chunarwala, Bhai Sudh Singh, Pardhan Singh, Bhai Jewala Singh Thatha Tibbawala. In the present days, Shagen Lal of Pakistan (a son of Bhai Lal d. 1962 A.D.) is among the followers of this tradition initiated by Bhai Mardana or Rahabi tradition of Kirtankars.
The eminent scholar of music Dr. A.S. Paintal says about Bhai Mandana that he was a master musician of that period. According to him, "The Guru, Guru Nanak, with his rare musical proficiency, was instrumental in the development of this modest talent, which blossomed forth in to high skill. The Guru had a special regard for Mandana."

With the passage of time, Kirtankar came under the sway of film music. Missionary traditions gave way to professionalism and rag base began to dwindle. Bhai Surjan Singh, a follower of Bhai Sein Ditte, initiated this line of Kirtankar. At present following Kirtankar are contributing to the cause of Gurmat Sangeet or Gurubani Sangeet. The names worth mentioning are Bhai Avtar Singh Gurcharan Singh (S/o Bhai Jawala Singh Jee), Bhai Sante Singh Chaman, Prof. Dershan Singh, Bhai Balkshish Singh, Late Bhai Devinder Singh, Bhai Kirpal Singh and Dalbag Singh Dalbag Singh.

Among classical music singers, who has an advance classical music learning, the noted Sikh-musicians who besides singing the various forms of Hindustani music are also performing Shabad Kirtan in Hindustani music concerts and Sikh congregation, the names of Dr. Ajit Singh Paintal, Singh Bandhu and S. Mehinder Singh are worth mentioning. As a matter of fact these people are

working for the real cause of Guru Nanak.

DHADI TRADITION:

From the times of Guru Nanak till the times of Guru Arjan Dev, Kirtan was a very powerful medium for the propagation of religious and divine ideas in Sikh religion. The martyrdom of Guru Arjan Dev gave a sudden turn to the Sikh history. The Sixth Guru, Shri Harpreet Singh Sahib to play the dual role of a saint and a soldier. In consonance with this decision, he initiated the tradition of reciting poems imbued with heroic fervour, from the highest seat of temporal power of the Sikh religion, Sri Akal Takhat. These poems of valour (Vaara) exhorted the adherents to remain faithful and devout and be ever ready to face the oppressions and aggressors.

In Rajasthan, the reciters of the tales of valour in verse had two categories; Bhatt and Dhadi. The former recited poems extolling their patrons. They did not use any musical instrument, whereas the latter used a musical instrument called Gharkha. The instrument played a significant role in arousing the feelings of heroism and bravery.

In the Sikhs, the Kirtan was accompanied with musical instruments. Hence the Dhadis began to influence the recitation of Kirtan. It increased its mass appeal. Mir Abdullah and Natha were two prominent Dhadis belonging to the Village Sur Surgh Mala near Lahore. They used to sing Vaara from the Holy Granth in the
tune of nine ancient Veersa. Of the two, Mir Hatho sang
the Veersa till the days of Guru Tegh Bahadur and
Guru Gobind Singh. Mir Chhabila and Mushki were two
other Dhadis who accompanied the Tenth Guru.

During the period of Guru Hargobind and Guru Gobind
Singh and up to Maharaja Ranjit Singh, the Sikhs had
fought many a battle against the Mughals and the
English. The Dhadis sang of the deeds of heroism,
devotion and valour to arouse the passions of the Sikh
masses to prepare them to face heavy odds on the
battlefield. Chandu Da Nah Da Virasat Virap (Lamentation
of Chandu’s Daughter-in-Law) and Mata Sulakhni are
among the popular Veers of the Akali Movement period.

In the modern times the tradition is being kept
alive and active by Sohan Singh Sitel, a prominent
writer, Daya Singh Dilber, Narain Singh Badi, Ram Singh
Chabowal, Giani Jaswant Singh Tean and a few others. From
the above it can therefore be concluded that the Kirpan
tradition has a systematic nurturing. Even today the
Kirpan, done by the Veers is primarily based on
classical musical norms.

Music is an art ever in flux. Changes in social
norms and modes do bring about a change in the presentation
of the art but the inherent qualities that the modern
Gurmat Sangeet whether the Gurbani Kirpan or the Dhadhi
tradition, owes its origin to the Gurmat Sangeet as
initiated by Guru Nanak Dev.