CHAPTER VII

MUGHAL RULE IN THE PANJAB AND LOSS OF DRAMA
Due to its peculiar history running over a number of centuries up to the close of 16th century when Mohammedans established their power over Panjab its culture had already developed on lines somewhat different from the rest of India, but this separatist trend got reinforced as a result of the contact with militant Islam some two centuries ahead of the rest of the country. King Mahmud of Ghazani, after plundering the country and destroying its seats of culture (whatever was left of it after the Hunas) brought Panjab under his rule at the start of the 11th century. Prior to the Turk-Afghans, many powerful centrifugal forces had been at work for its cultural integration and uniformity with the rest of the Indian sub-continent, with the result that the exclusiveness of the Panjab was being always moderated and the province almost always presented the picture of a passage ground for influences with a constant two-way traffic. The Panjab could always boast of a certain different complexion in culture distinct from the rest the tonal difference was always there but the distinguishing traits were never so marked as to render it almost peculiar. While Mahmud left the rest of India to its fate, his Indian expeditions brought about the political unification of the Panjab with the newly converted and fiercely bigoted Muslim Afghanistan. Panjab came to be ruled by Ghazani and lost its independence and by slow degrees its religious and cultural uniformity, its morale and its close kinship with the rest of the nation, for all practical purposes. It lost its cultural heritage almost completely and worse, the pride in it that could lead to its retention and revival.
CONTACT V. MILITANT ISLAM.

As mentioned above Islam came to the Panjab some two centuries earlier than the rest of India. The Arabs occupied Multan centuries ahead of the expeditions of Mahmud of Ghazni but the Islamic influence did not make much headway from the south and had negligible effect "on the course of cultural history of the main Panjab". The annexation of Panjab by Mahmud of Ghazni was a different case altogether. It is true that Panjab because of its geographical position had always been the gateway of India and very occasionally was the meeting ground of cultures. It was the province of contact between the Indian and the foreign culture of all descriptions and not unoften gave birth to hybrid cultural developments with a very peculiar tonal and sometime substantial distinctions of their own. Many a time Panjab was dismembered from the main national body and possessed a political identity that made for indigenous cultural growth. Panjab was the birth place of many a movement in the cultural and religious spheres and had founded a number of cults and schools that spread out towards the main Indian sub-continent as well as Central Asiatic regions. In spite of all this Panjab had remained Indian and had always a close kinship and affinity of culture with the rest of the nation. The Panjab now lost its soul to the foreign invader and the soul in its ultimate analysis was the soul of India—Panjab including. This contact with militant Islam shook the region to the roots. About two centuries of Afghan rule preceding the conquest of Delhi by Mohd. Gauri made all the difference. There were conversions in the Panjab population. The foreign rulers were unsympathetic and believed in heaping insults on the faith and beliefs of
local inhabitants. The Hunas had ravaged the country and made it culturally barren. When the Mohammandans came from Afghanistan side, Panjab was already a desolate place. The old glory that was Panjab did not exist. The new imposition of foreign and antagonistic rule with its nascent proselytizing zeal brought about a grievous break with the past. Thus Panjab under went a spiritual transformation and gradually and steadily acquired a process of departure from the past, discarding its cultural heritage. This situation became fixed and rooted in Panjab soil for centuries to come.

**CULTURAL BREAK IN THE PANJAB**

After Mahmud of Ghazni upto the accession of Maharaja Ranjit Singh to the throne of Lahore in 1804, Panjab remained uninterruptedly under the yoke of Muslim rule for some eight centuries which is a period long enough to change the complexion of the province out of shape and recognition. Sanskrit learning became a thing of the past. The already expired Sanskrit stage lost all chance of revival in the Panjab. The new feudal class was almost wholly Mohammandan, of local and foreign extraction and the ruling sections consisted mostly of Muslim settlers in India. The language of the court and administration came to be Persian while Sanskrit languished in the exclusive

1. While works of Sanskrit sue 1 Shastra B an dramas like Hammirmada-vardana by Jay Singh Suri; Pradyumna-abhyudaya by Bavirman, Partap Rudra Kalyan by Vidyanath, Sarvati Parinaya by Wama Bhattacharya, Gangadasa Pratapa Vilasa by Gangadhar and Vidagaha Madhava and Lalita Madhava by Rupa Goswami came to be written in different part of India during the Turko-Afghan era, Panjab did not produce even one; see *An Advanced History of India* by Majumdar, Ray Chaudhuri and Datta (1956) p.408.
custody of the Hindu priestly class and was confined to ritual only and its use was extremely restricted. The Hindus who collaborated with the foreigners, took to their ways, learnt and adopted Persian and dressed after them. Interest in old Indian culture especially secular literature, including drama and poetry, increased and the literature itself, from its previous written form, undergoing shocking malformations in the process.

**FIRST SIGNS OF CULTURAL RESURRECTION.**

From the dawn of the 11th century, right up to the close of 14th century, there is in evidence no symptom of revival anywhere to-be-seen and it is for the first time towards the advent of Mughal rule in India that the spirit of revival and revolt found its conscious spokesman in Guru Nanak. He however preached his gospel in Panjabi, the spoken language of the times and opposed the Brahmipriesthood who were the only people who traded in Sanskrit in those days. This finally put an end to the hope of Sanskrit revival in the Panjab and with that of Sanskrit Drama.

Muslims by faith were opposed to drama and had no stage tradition of their own. They first of all came into contact with certain folk dramatic forms practised by Hindu priestly and mendicant classes and were full of contempt for imitations of the big ones by humans and denounced the practice in strong terms. Thus the influence of the rulers on the dramatic art of the Panjab was doubtfully ruinous. Their lack of
dramatic tradition was discouraging to the adoption of the strange art by themselves, nor they could be patronising towards the local practitioners. Even folk dramatic forms relating to religion of the Hindus were gradually given up under duress by professionals who had subsisted on the profession and now found themselves obliged to give up their traditional trade for something more acceptable to the religious susceptibilities of the Muslim rulers. Most of these classes embraced the new religion. In fact these religious folk dramatist of whom we will learn more as we progress in our study of the subject, were squeezed out of existence in the Panjab under the double pressure of Mohammedan prejudices and Hindu reformist condemnation.

MUSLIM RELIGIOUS POLICY

Religious policy of the Sultans was one of discrimination against their Hindu subjects. Muslim chroniclers have lavished praises on Alaud-din, Faroze Shah and Sikandar Lodhi for their religious fanaticism. We can say that the rulers of the Mughal dynasty were only a little less hard than those of the Sultanate period, Babar 1526-30 was not a persecutor of non-Muslims but he did not desist from discriminating against them. Popular attitude towards heretics and non-Muslims continued to be hostile even in the liberal reigns of emperors like Akbar (1556-1605) who disestablished Islam as a State religion.

Proselytising activity seems to have continued throughout Shahjahan's reign who is known to have appointed a Superintendent of Converts to Islam and set up a de r u r e l. In order to contrast stritly to the Muslim law he exclude Muslims from paying stamp duties, thus confining the Tax to Hindus alone.
for converting Hindus to the Muslim faith. Aurangzeb (1658 – 1707) completed the process of re-action and once again established Islam as state religion and made a sustained attempt at converting India into a Muslim country. He abolished the celebration of the Solar New Year festivities and Hindu festivals like Dussehra, Basant and Holi at Delhi court. As a climax to his religious policy of bigotry, Aurangzeb even stopped the celebration of Muharram, a Shia festival. He issued firman for the dismissal of Hindus from the Revenue Department. Orders in accordance with the organisation of Islam were sent to the Governors of all the provinces that they should destroy the schools and temples of infidels and put an end to their educational activities as well as the practices of the religions of the Kafir. It was laid down in the Fatwa-i- Alamgiri that the Hindus should not be allowed to look like Muslims. In furtherance of this, it was ordered in 1694 that except Rajputs and Marathas, no Hindus were to be allowed to ride on Iraqi or Turani horse, and elephant, nor to use a planquin.

The hated Jazia was imposed on the Hindus in April 1679. A narration of all that transpired in the Aurangzeb period in India in the matter of religious intolerance and prosecution of the non-Muslims with a view to convert them and resulting in the conversion of the State into a mission.

4. Ma'asir -i-Amirgiri, Saqi Mustadkhan, p.16.
5. News letter 2 December, 1694
6. Jazia was to be paid by all and sundry in Muslim India and Rajput states by officials and non-officials, Brahman and non-Brahman, clergy and fighters. Aurangzeb's imposition differed from all earlier impositions in that it was laid on the persons living in feudatory states as well. – G.S.
institution, do not make a pleasant reading. All this, however, resulted in widespread distress as well as revolt. It should be sufficient to say that the policy of religious tolerance and emotional integration introduced in India by Akbar in the 16th century was completely discarded or even reversed by Aurangzeb. Thus taken as a whole, the period of Pathan and Mughal rulers in the Panjab was one that resulted in the movement of disintegration of Indian society on Hindu and Muslim lines, the trend receding or gathering momentum, with every change of rulers but never quite non-existent. With Aurangzeb, it gained its climax towards the close of the 17th century and the beginning of the 18th century. Since the Panjab bordered on Afghanistan and was the first to be subjugated by Muslim rulers biggest and the earliest conversions took place in this province and large tracts of the region went predominantly Muslim. The low caste entertaining classes were among the first to embrace the new religion of the rulers. The feudal classes, whom they served all over the Panjab, very soon came to acquire the Islamic faith. They were Patha Mughals, Sayyads and converts from earlier feudal classes, feudal Hindu chiefs.

SOCIAL DIVISION:

Brahmins preached fatalism and hollow ritualism. They advocated boycott of the aliens on the social plain, the retaliatory rate equaling the arrogance of the Muslim rulers. They preached and practiced untouchability against them as a religious duty of the Hindus. A very slight, even unintentional violation of the digas regarding the social boycott of Muslims resulted in widespread ostracisation of Hindus, who were readily taken into the Muslim fold. Reconversion was not allowed. All this made for social
division of the Panjab. The new language of administration, courts and cultural intercourse became Persian with its own script, while the local language and scripts were subordinated and were practiced by the Hindu trading classes for purposes of business mainly making it unworthy for cultural expression of a developed type. The new feudal class that was mostly alien, imported its own culture, modes of living and entertainment and did not relish anything Indian, at least in the beginning. Perhaps in the absence of the deeply entrenched caste system in the Indian society of the times, the impact of the Semitic Muslim Culture on Panjab society would not have resulted in a permanent social cleavage, poluting the future unity of the Panjabi nationality, for the institution of the caste and the allied concept of untouchability made the division of society on Hindu and Muslim lines a matter of fundamental social concept in India, over a course of centuries, right up to the modern times.

FAILURE OF THE INTEGRATING PROCESS.

Innumerable attempts made from time to time by well meaning humanists and the compulsion of integrating forces that came into play in full in the days of the Mogh emperor Akber, met with a partial and superficial success and that too proved ephemeral and transitory, with the result that a truly homogeneous and composite culture in the Panjab remained only a dream, never to be achieved in full in the Muslim and even post Muslim period in India and for that matter, though to a lesser extent, in the Panjab.

PUNJAB WITHOUT DRAMA IN THE EARLY MUSLIM PERIOD.

All this proved fatal to the projection and prolongation of developed cultural traditions in the country.
and we find that there was no drama in the era after
Mahmud of Ghazni annexed Punjab. Muslim chroniclers,
contemporary and later, make no mention of it even
in condemnation. The drama failed to revive because
Mohammadans would not have it for religious propagation
and Hindus being dominated as a class, often persecuted
and discriminated against were not in a mood to adopt
regular drama even for religious purposes. At best, it
could be a Hindu affair, not meant for the whole Punjab
society, and Hindus would not indulge in this type of
ostentatious religious activity which, being also an
instrument of entertainment, was also at the same time
never looked upon with favour by their own serious minded
sectarian religious and social reformers. In fact the
atmosphere all these centuries, with some salutary breaks,
was one of continuous tension and sense of resistance for
the Hindus of the Punjab and thus they were not in a mood
to stage dramas, or anything similar. It was considered a
frivolous activity when the community was in constant
high danger of extinction. Thus through a double process
of non-adopting by the ruling and converted Muslim
community, and relinquishing of the same by the Hindus of
the Punjab, the fate of the developed form of drama was
sealed, more specially in this province during the Muslim
and post-Muslim period, right up to the British times.

RELIGIOUS CONDITIONS.

At the time of the 1st Muslim invasions the cults
of Natha and Yogis and Mother Goddesses were the popular
cults in the Punjab, while Brahmins subsisted on ritual here
1. The account given of Natha plays on stage n h s
recently discovered dramatic poem DEVARASO by Adhaman of
Multan towards the beginning of Mohd. Gauri’s rule, can
only be taken to refer to conditions before the annexation
of Punjab by Muslims. - G.S.
was very little high philosophy in practice while superstition held the ground almost completely. Hath were a Shaivite ascetic order while Siddhas belonged to a non-descript sect so far believed to be a decadent form of Mahayani Buddhism. Buddhism as such had already left the land. Sakatas and Tantrics had some following and there was no end to all round social degradation. Muhamma when they came to India for the first time from the North West regarded Indians as infidel image worshippers, worthy to be converted. They had nothing but contempt for their religious professions and practices. Instances of mass conversions in these early Muslim times are many. Even top religious personages are known to have embraced Islam. Some of the early Sufi mystics like Sheikh Farid Shikar-i-Ganj, unlike their later successors preached Islam and people in thousands are known to have come into the fold of the faithful as a result of their proselytising efforts. From Mahdi, of Ghazni, upto the advent of Sultamate a period and till towards the close of Lodhi rule, there is absolutely no evidence of any vitality left among the Punjab Hindus.

**LINGUISTIC DEVELOPMENT:**

The language of Panjab from Abahmaranska saw a rapid transition into the modern Punjabi during the 11th and 12th centuries, so much so that foreign Muslims of Panjab domicile took to a wholly modernised Punjabi language (with a quantity of naturalised Persian vocabulary) as their mother tongue. We can resort to the example of

Sheikh Farid, the first to write in (in fact coeedin 1. Rattan Nath, a Yogi precept and a poet an race Islam- G. 2. See my article 'Farid Kavi Di Pramrpr ' in Farid Anok of Panjabi Dunya, Patiala- 1960.
all poets of modern Indo-Aryan Languages of India by a long margin.

**THE SIKH MOVEMENT AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE.**

Then came the belated awakening in the Punjab of which the founder spokesman was Guru Nanak (1469-1539). It was the resurrection of dead spirit of Punjab which very soon caught up the dimensions of a massive movement. It was not however a movement of revival as it did take cognizance of the changed social and historical context that had come about as a result of Muslim impact on Indian society in general and Punjab society in particular, during the past centuries of Afghan rule in this part of the country.

Thus the Moghul rule in the Punjab started with the birth of Sikh Movement. Guru Nanak, the founder of the movement was not merely a saint or Bhagat of the Niguna or Saguna traditions as was the case with most of the saints of the Bhagti cult elsewhere, he had a practical and realist philosophy of social responsibility and patriotic action, based upon humanitarian principles, while he preached universality of God and brotherhood of man, he was not a fatalist or pacifist, nor he preached submission or surrender for the sake of harmony in the country. In fact he denounced the atrocities committed by the invading hordes of Babar in the Punjab when he invaded India and was highly

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1. **Sto. Guru Nanak: Guru Granth.**

2. **Ibid.**
critical of the moral degradation of Government functionaries and the ruling classes of his times. He satirised the way of the cowardly Hindus who had taken to the culture and language of the foreigners in order to please them. But he did not preach Brahminical revival and criticised the escapist self-seekers of the ascetic orders still numerous and influential in the province and known as men of cult powers and renunciation. Add to this his stress on oneness of God, unity of the human race and love of mankind. He through example and precept preached commonality of all religious and thus tried to cut at the root of Hindu Muslim antagonism. By now Muslims in India were not foreign invaders, nor even alien settlers but were part of the Indian nation.

**FUSION PROCESS AT WORK.**

Guru Nanak, due to his intuitive insight into the reality of social situation, wanted to initiate a process of fusion of the two cultures that should result in an abiding unity of hearts and outlook and reconcile the conflicting elements resulting in abiding national unity.

Guru Nanak’s gospel of unity and social justice had some mentionable initial success. Under the direct impact of this Sikh version of Bhakti Movement, there grew up a sect of Sufis among the Muslims who preached love of humanity and Hindu Muslim unity on the basis of a Philosophy. Sain Mianmir of Lahore is an example in point. He was a great friend of the Sikh Gurus and laid the foundation stone of their central temple Harimandir at Amritsar in times of the 1. Mianmir Cantonment of Lahore was named o after this Sufi saint---- G.S.
4th Sikh Guru, Guru Ram Das, Akbar's religious liberalism was conducive to the success and spread of Sikh and Sufi faiths in the Panjab and the two movements had great potentialities of coalescing and resulting indig leap forward towards the liquidation of the age old communal discord that was the bane of Indian society all these centuries of Muslim rule and challenging enough for humanists of the Sikh and Sufi movements.

**POPULAR CULTURAL REVIVAL.**

These were the times from Guru Nanak (1469-1539 A.D.) to Guru Arjan (1563-1606 A.D.) and in a major way of the reign of Akbar when art and literature revived in the Panjab and attained its highest water mark of achievement. We have called this period as the Golden period of Panjabi literature. That, this time the rebirth of the literary spirit in the Panjab found most powerful and beautiful expression in neo- Panjabi and not its Sanskrit is highly significant. In this respect Guru Nanak and his poetic compositions are symbolic of the age— they were solemn, profound and in a majorway in the language of the people. Though Guru Nanak and his successors did not discard the legacy of the religious and philosophical vocabulary of the Pali Prakrit and later Aṣṭāṣṭarāṁśha times, he went for Panjabi of contemporary complexion, with an admixture of naturalised Persian vocabulary in his less philosophical and more lyrical and popular composition. Sanskrit was thus given up by the new renaissance in the Panjab, the Brahmin community, the traditional custodian of Sanskrit was relegated to the background. This was one cause why Sanskrit drama even in the writing or translation form was not revived in the Panjab in these days.
LACK OF DRAMA AND ITS CAUSES.

Drama as such in any other language than Sanskrit too did not strike roots in the Punjab soil even in Akbar's reign, the only period in the long history of Muslim rule in India when atmosphere was salubrious enough to the growth of a communal entertainment medium like drama, because of the prevailing mood of general seriousness in the province. This was due to the newly developing religious movements that were swaying powerfully the minds of the Punjab people. These, under the nascent impact of Muslim social discipline, regarded all forms and uses of the dramatic form as frivolous and worthy of social censure and discouragement. The great Sufi poet Shah Hussain (1538-1600 A.D.) was a contemporary of Guru Arjan who compiled Guru Granth Sahib in 1604. Romancers like Damadar and Pakoo wrote their fictional stories in colloquial Panjabi verse in these times which compositions are symptomatic of the break with the pre-occupation with religion and general seriousness that had overtaken the Punjab of those times, but the predominant mood still remained one of sobriety and responsible seriousness. The masses in an expansive way were pre-occupied with morals and the expanding Sikh movement had much to do with it.

DOMINANCE OF THE MUSLIM SENTIMENT.

The Misa poetry of these times is definitely secular with an appeal for all, without distinctions of caste and creed; but meant for the masses and not for the classes.

suggesting the possible eruption of the dormant urge of the people for community entertainment into dramatic activity in the very near future; for the arts of the narrative poetry and drama are historically associated together and have not oftener flourished side by side. The classes could also have taken to secular drama. This eventuality, however, failed to come about due mainly to the changed political atmosphere in the province that developed very shortly after the death of Akbar, when currents in opposition to the spirit of the Akbarian times ever ran hold the land of five rivers and sounded the death knell of all that was existing as healthy and beautiful and blighted the future of drama in the country that, as we have seen, was still in the womb of possibility.

Much came to be written and circulated in the Panjab that was of Persian language. It had its influence, more or less on certain forms of writings in Panjabi and to be sure, not on drama of its birth because the drama did not exist in that language.

HANUMAN HATAK.

These very productive times saw in Panjab the birth of Sanskrit Brij Bhasha poetry. One such book is Hanuman Hatak by Hirday Ram (1680) Bik. (according to Dashrath Ojha) Nothing much is known about the author of the book besides the name but he most probably belonged to

1. Hirday Ram is said to be the author of "Rakmani Mangal Hatak" as well but it is not extant.

the times of Moghul emperors Akbar and Jahangir. The
book is of some interest to us because of its name which
in fact means 'Hanuman Drama'. This book is a Brij Shastri
poetic version of Ramayana, the old Sanskrit epic of India
and is not a drama or Natak as we know it. The use of the
word, 'Natak' or drama, for narrative verse is a strange
commentary on the loss of its original meaning of a theatrical
art and now altered connotation which the word had developed
by the time we reach the date of the composition of
Hanuman Natak. Natak now means not the 'narrative in the
dramatic form meant to be staged' which was the original
1. Hirday Ram has briefly introduced himself in the book
itself, according to which his father’s name is Lechman Das and he was a devotee of Rama. He has also given the
year of composition as 1600 Bk. or 1623 A.D. when Jahangir
was on the throne.
Some Nath Gupt: Poorab - Bhartenda Natak Sahitya- Hindi
2. Hirday Ram’s 'Hanuman Natak' is undiluted Braji of the
age and for its technical perfection as well as for its
inspiring orthodox treatment of the characters has all
through its career been a most valued unit of the classics
forming the group of the humanities education in which was
desired, till the beginning of the present century, an
indispensable Sikh cultural equipment."
Dr. Mohan Singh: A History of Panjabi Literature (Kasturi
Lal and sons, 1956) p. 49
The Panjab had not forgotten the Ramayana which was drawn
upon by Hirday Ram for his Hanuman Natak (1623 A.D.) it was
still dramatic poetry or opera not prose drama."
Dr. Mohan Singh, Indian Drama (Pub.Div) p. 82
3. Dr. Som Nath Gupt, In his Hindi Natak Sahitya, Ka Itihas
(at page 49) has chosen to stress as ‘dramatic poetry.’
According to him, it is not drama proper in any sense of the
word. Again he says that the author has given it the wrong
name of drama, possibly because he while translating it had
the form of the original Sanskrit drama in his view but
forgot all about this fact as soon as he started writing it
in Brij. It is called drama only because it is broken into
acts and not into Sargas like the epic but this division
into acts is nominal and not actual. Dr. Deshrath Jha, in
his book ‘Hindi Natak Aur Uska Vikas’ contradicts the view
that the Brij book is a translation of the original Sanskrit
for in addition to other material differences, this one
is without the Mandi Sutradaara of the original. G.S.
meaning of the word but a quality of the style of the narrative which should be dramatic. In simpler words it connotes a story in verse in which dramatic events are described. Drama has been detached from stage which ceased to exist long ago. Since of its original form, it is now undistinguishable from any verse narrative with an interesting sequence of striking incidents.

BACHITTAR NATAK

Loss of stage is taken for granted and the new poets wrote 'drama' that are no dramas at all. In this altered sense, sometimes later Guru Gobind Singh used the word Bachittar Natak for an autobiographical poem written in Desh-Bhakti. Again this book is not a drama, rather it is the negation of it and the title is a misnomer if we take the original sense of the word 'Natak'. Some historians of Punjabi Literature have been misled by this occurrence of the word 'Natak' in these titles and have sought to trace the origin of modern drama in the Punjab from these writings. In this Dr. Mohan Singh and the authors of Natak Ratnakar jall mistaken.

Dr. Mohan Singh calls a long poetical work by Guru Gobind Singh, the Dialogue between Parus and Machhindar Nath which describes the conflict between the armies of Desermination and Non-desermination as a morality play and the authors of Natak Ratnakar have found all the qualities of 1. Dr. Desrath Cjha has mentioned (Hindi Natak 2,159) Bachittar Natak and Chandi Charitra of Guru Gobind Singh as one book. He is grossly mistaken in this as these are two distinctly separate compositions. While Bachittar Natak is Guru's autobiography, Chandi Charitra describes the exploits of Chandi Goddess against the demons. None of the two is a drama either. 2. Dr. Mohan Singh : The Indian Drama (Publication Division pp. 92-93.
Drama in the Panjab

Bhan type of Sanskrit play in Guru Gobind Singh's Bachittar Natak. Neither the dialogue between Paras and Machhandar Math is a Morality, nor Bachittar Natak is a Bhan. This attempt at including all sort of poetry in the category of drama needs to be repudiated.

Guru Gobind Singh did not write any drama as such. It is another matter that some of his long narrative poems have many dramatic incidents described in them. The contention of Natak Ratnakar is also wrong and betrays their ignorance of the nature of Bhan type of ancient Sanskrit drama.

That should not however make us run away with the belief that Guru Gobind Singh's times had no popular comedy as well. It is mentioned in history that a Nagal was staged in the court of Guru Gobind Singh himself which brought to the pointed notice of the Guru some of the reprehensible malpractices on the part of his Nasandas (Missionaries).

Parbodhachandrodaya

Sometimes after Guru Gobind Singh, the famous Sanskrit drama, Parbodhachandrodaya, a morality play was done into Panjabi - Hindi by the famous Panjabi poet.

2. Hira Singh Dard in his Introduction to Natak Ratnakar by Gill and Ajit . P. 5
Gulab Singh under the name Probodh Chandra Natak (1783)
in a very correct sense he is the pioneer translator of
a Sanskrit drama in Hindi in the Panjab. This book he
completed in 1846 Bikram at Kurukshetra as recorded by
himself.

It is in Brij verse and is free translation of
the famous allegorical Sanskrit original by Krishna
Mishra in which personifications of Anger, Faith, Rational
Devotion etc. appear as characters.

Even in the original form, the book cannot be
called a drama. "Bhavabhuti and Vishakhadatta were the
last of the giants. After them Sanskrit drama declined,
Those that followed had no drama in them, they were
'Champus' in the guise of drama and this tendency went
to such an extent that Krishnamisra wrote Probodhchandrodaya
which is Philosophy in the form of dialogues." The play
has been translated again and again, the oldest translation
being the one by Maharaja Jaswant Singh, the ruler of Jodh
which belong to the middle of the 17th century. Another
quite successful version is by Brajwasidas and was prepared
in the 16th century, in the days when Gulab Singh composed
his translation in Brij Bhasha (called Panjabi Hindi) by Dr.
Mohan Singh) and wrote in Gurmukhi script in the
1. Gulab Singh was born n 2 Bikram an was a Birm a 3
saint with great Sanskrit scholarship to his credit. He took
his education at Khadi and is well known for the authorship
of Bhavarasamanit and Probodh Chandra Natak . S.S.
Guru Gobind Singh (1666-1708 A.D.) founded a movement of revolt against Aurangzeb, the bigoted tyrant and last in the process most of the members of the family including among them his mother and all the four sons. The revolt was carried forward with fire and fury by Banda Singh Bahadur after the death of the Guru in 1708. This was followed by about a century of ruthless fighting, persecutions and mass killings in the Panjab when the Sikh movement challenged the might of the Moghul rule in a determined bid to wrest for themselves and fellow citizens, civil liberty and freedom of conscience. To add to this enveloping unrest in the Panjab, there occurred invasions of the country by Nadir and Ahmad Shah Abdali from the North-west accompanied by plunder, loot, massacres and killings all along the routes of the invading hordes. Panjab in 18th century was a cauldron seething with rebellion, cold as well as hotting and the power changed hands locally and occasionally. While the Muslim ruling classes coped with the Sikh rebellion in the province, the Muslim masses remained generally passive and inarticulate and had actually more sympathy with the rebel Sikhs of which they would make display, more so towards the later part of the 18th century when the fortunes of Moghul imperialism were visibly receding fast in this province, than with their co-religionist ruling classes. In any case Panjab presented a gory picture of deteriorating lawlessness, high handed persecution and bloody strife till there was not a semblance of law and order or central control left anywhere over the province.
DRAMA IN THE PUNJAB

When such a relentless drama was being performed on such a wide scale and on such a vast stage as the whole land of five rivers, what scope could there be for the small drama which is essentially a thing of peace and prosperity. Peace came rather late, after a long drawn out holocaust that caused the destruction of almost all educational institutions in the state and spread illiteracy and loss of culture. Thus Sikhs were the crusaders devoted to the profession of arms, Hindus were generally scared and listless and Muslim masses possessed some normal stability for sometime and pursued literary pastime here and there but more so in the western Punjub where the situation was a little less turbulent. There was some good romantic narrative poetry written by Muslim poets the great masterpiece of Waris's Hir is among these.

DRAMATIC POETRY OF HIR.

Hir of Waris Shah is an expansive narrative in which the characters develop the story in an exchange of speeches, rich in colloquial and spoken idiom, proverb and phraseology. The story is broken into a sequence of incidents described as scenes, conceived dramatically and linked together by small connecting notes called Kalam-i-Shair (speech of the poet). The narrative thus built up main b a series of scenes, This tradition of dramatic poetry for public recitation by Kali das of Gujrana (1365-1341) is a public dramatic festival, which celebrates love and plays fun at half a dozen social figures and institutions. Such poetry continues to be written and the last and best performance was Puran by Kali das of Gujrana (1365-1341)." Dr. Mohan Singh: Indian Drama (Publication Division) P.92.
Ouch and fail to rise up to the occasion at junctures of crises. He is now coming to grips with deeper themes as displayed by his latest works, 'Ratta Saloo' and 'Shehba Shakti'. Harisharan Singh will be remembered for his historical role as a builder of Panjabi stage after J.C. Nanda.

Although Panjabi Stage remained contained between Harisharan Singh and his circle, with only a few honorable exceptions, almost up to the partition (15th August, 1947), a few more kindred spirits were actuated to write Panjabi drama including a large number of one-act plays. In this connection Sant Reh Singh with Banto (a full length social farce) 1 Mamma Singh with his Jhakian (March, 1941) 1 Pritam Singh Bhatia with a collection of small plays, Pritam Singh Saifer 2 with his 'Panj Natak,' Nanak Singh with his 'B.A. Pass', 3 (1936) and Gurbux Singh Preet Lari are mentionable names. Banto (1939) by Sant Ran Singh was written without much sense of the stage, but was a singular publication replete with non-intellectual uninhabited realistic humour of the central Panjab Peasant Life, Mohan Singh 4.

of emotionally charged speeches and retorts, a style

of dramatic in essence invented and developed by the author

Waris Shah for the first time in the domain of Punjabi

poetry. It was a very singular development fraught

with all sort of possibilities for the birth of poetic

drama, for the dramatic poetry of Waris could have

an easy transition into regular dramatic form, had their

existed conducive circumstances for such a development.

The genius of Waris was essentially dramatic and he

within him had the making of a fine tragedian but very

unfortunately, he was born in wrong times when drama could

not develop. Waris’s Hir was, however, easily adaptable

for the purpose of stage and this latent quality, as we

see, was discovered much later near the modern times by

some enterprising dramatic workers in the Punjab when

Hir of Waris was actually staged among the big audiences

on the occasions of rural fairs, Besides this Hir of Waris,

a number of other romances were also current in these days.

There was no conscious drama or stage in the

province during the 18th century. Only folk performances of

a very restricted dramatic content and value were resorted

to as part of the social tradition, among the more stable

communities of the times.

1 See Chapter on March of the Popular Drama in the Pan a

2 Of the unclaimed romances of the period the most impo

is that of Gopi Chand Malavanti, many manuscript copies of

which are available. It is cast in the dialogic form, at th

end are the Oaths of Nirban Jog composed by Gorakh Nath.


Dr. Mohan Singh Davanak: History of Punjabi Literature. (2n


There were most probably the texts used by Saugis and

Baahriyas of the Punjab in earlier and subsequent times

(See Chapter on March of Popular Drama) C.C.