**ODUCTORY**

"DRAMA IN THE PANJAB: its Origin, Development, Characteristics and Trends" this being my subject, I must confess that the task of research set before me was formidable and difficult. It was a searching journey through long hitherto untraversed stretches of time and space and the aids were few and feeble. To fathom a whole sea of uncertainties that lay between the points of start and finish was my assignment. The voyage of discovery however, turned out to be full of surprises and thrills and offered the recompense of pleasure due to an explorers who knows that steady head has been made and good effort duly and honestly made. The job of negotiating the hoary past and moving down-stream the Panjab history starting with its Bronze Age, through the Vedic, Post-Vedic, Epic, Buddhist, Indo-Greek, Kushan, Harsha, Post Harsha, Pre Muslim, Muslim Sikh and British periods till we touch the shores of present times, with a view to resurrecting the story of drama through all these ages, arduous and long no doubt, had yet its distinctive rewarding features. In traversing all these dark and not unoften blank distances (considering the poverty and undependability of the available enlightening material on the subject in hand,) I was confronted with the dual task, firstly, of constructing the history of the land, history in all its diverse aspects and secondly, of making out the social and cultural base from period to period and proceeding to establish the character of the theatrical activity on this base, following at the same time the tortuous course of the long history of the province till we come upon the terminus in the present times.

I have endeavoured to accomplish the dual task and the results of my labours, of whatever worth and merit, are.
incorporated in the following chapters. Most of the 'facts'
of history pertaining to the past of Panjab, so far discovered
more specially those relating to its antiquity have bristled
with controversy so that I was obliged to put the same to a
very cautious use. Under the circumstance scientific precisio
and exactitude in arriving at conclusions was hardly to be
expected, although a serious endeavour has certainly
been made to work with this aim in view. Some element of
speculation and conjecture, however, could not be avoided at
some places, considering the volatile and fugitive nature of
most of the evidential material procurable at this stage.

I have, therefore, proceeded cautiously like an
agnostical historian and taken nothing for granted. In the
matter of chronology and a large measure of other evidence
that was within reach I kept wary against easy credulity and
when contending against current or established notions or
stating my own postulates and positions have taken good care
to conjure up only such supporting evidence, about the weight
nature of which I made real effort to make sure in advance.
quotations are ample but only from properly ascertained
sources. This was done with much conscious endeavour in the
case of Part I of the study, while with the approach of times
close to the modern or more specifically the modern period
itself, personal knowledge has been relied upon as a matter
of choice and absolute dependence on source material, being
superfluous has been generally abandoned.

Since dramatic activity of all descriptions and of all
languages as these came up in sequence as media of theoretic
expression, was to be studied throughout the known and known
times of the Panjab history, the panoramic view at I had
to construct in all its comprehensive, temporal and spacial
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dimensions, would not brook any superfluity if it was to be compressed into a study of reasonable length and yet the huge span of the study over which it ran, made for volume, difficult to manage and keep under control. Thus it is that the dictates of imperative economy led at places to seeming brevity but I have seen to it that the essential is not sacrificed at the altar of conciseness.

Historically speaking, the story of Panjab drama falls in two quite distinct periods into which the study has, therefore, been broken. While the period beginning with the Indus Valley Civilization up to the end of Sikh Period or the middle of 19th century, has been placed in part I, the subsequent developments comprise Part II. The chapter on the run of popular drama heads other studies enclosed in Par II, as the popular forms of the Panjab theatre have been discussed in their present day settings and only their tradition have been traced back into the past, as they go in some cases.

During the British period the Panjab came closest to the rest of India and the trend towards homogeneity was being steadily reinforced by factors and forces totally new to the history of the land, with the result that dramatic phenomena generally lost its regional characteristics and became much more universal than ever before. A Movement would take birth at one place and settle down at some other. For example the Parsi drama movement came to Panjab in full force, with the result that all those who wrote for these 'companies' anywhere in India, in a sense, also belonged to the Panjab. Even here I have taken it to be my task to distinguish Panjabi talent from non-Panjabi but in doing so I have to be liberal and to include men from outside Panjab who worked in the geographical bounds of the province as among the Panjab people and their contribution towards the development of drama and stage as that of Panjabi stock.
As I come to the close of my introductory paras, I would like to take this opportunity to pay my respectful tributes to all those historians, Indologists and Indian as well as foreign scholars whose works I had the good chance to ponder over and exploit and from whom I have quoted in support or otherwise in my thesis or contention or on whose valuable writings I leaned for support or information to build argument and arrive at conclusions.

As part of my bounden duty I also record here my gratitude to my guide Dr. Sher Singh, M.A., Ph.D., who beyond being a supervisor of my work, was a philosopher and a friend to me. It would have been difficult to accomplish my task without his very helpful attitude throughout. Thanks are also due to Shri M.L. Khosla, Principal, Mahendra College Patiala, who being an astute and devoted historian was ever willing to help me out of my difficulties.

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