

Gurbakhsh Singh (1895-1977), Punjabi novelist, story writer, essayist, playwright, journalist, visionary and founder of 'Preet Nagar', a unique experiment in co-operative living, was a multifaceted personality. Starting his career as a clerk, he worked his way up to become an engineer but chose to turn a farmer.

The first modern stylist in Punjabi, Gurbakhsh Singh transformed the hitherto pedestrian prose into a strong vehicle of expression. A born rebel, his ideas shocked the orthodox but came as a whiff of fresh air, stirring people to a new awakening and filling them with love, courage and faith. *Preet Lari*, a monthly founded in 1933, and edited by him made a deep impact on the readers. It was in its columns that most of his own writings first appeared. Gurbakhsh Singh's prominent works include *Unviahi Man* (novel), *Pritan di Pahredar* (short stories), *Rajkumari Latika* (drama), *Parian da Mochi* (juvenile literature), *Meri Jivan Kahani* (autobiography in three parts) and *Light of Asia* (translation).

Surindar Singh Kohli (b. 1920), teacher, writer and critic, has written extensively in English and Punjabi. In a teaching career spanning thirty-six years, Dr Kohli worked in various capacities, notably as Professor and Head, Department of Punjabi, Panjab University; Dean, Panjab University; and Director, Institute of Cultural Studies, Guru Nanak Foundation. In *Light of Asia*, Kohli evaluates the life and works of Gurbakhsh Singh mainly for the non-Punjabi readers.



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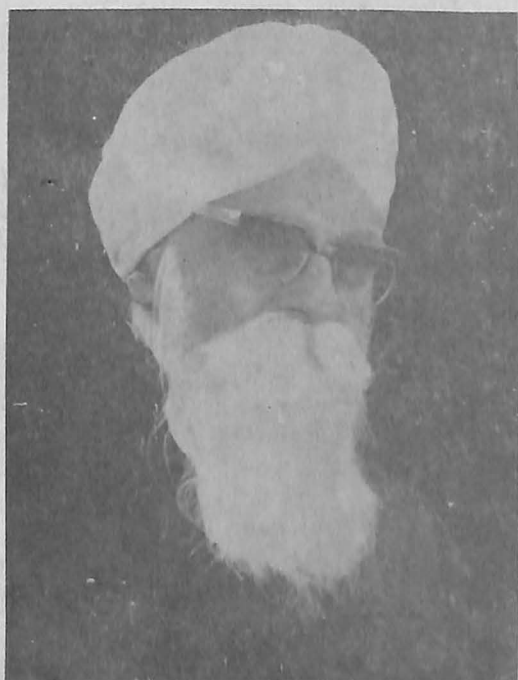
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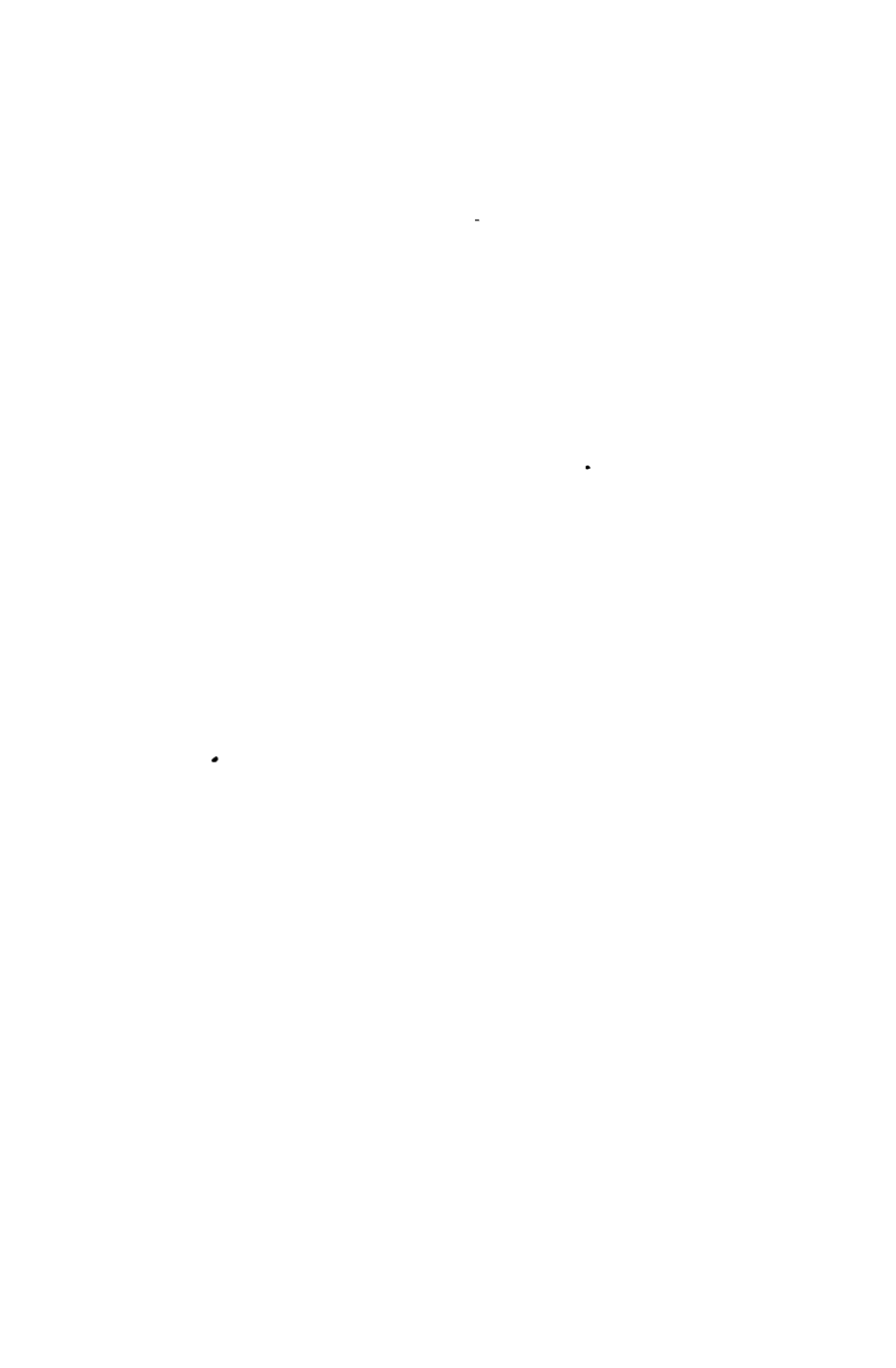
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From **Nagarjunakonda**, 2nd century A. D.

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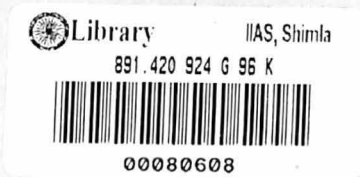


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CONTENTS

1	Literary Heritage	7
2	Life	14
3	Contribution to Punjabi Prose	21
4	Contribution to Punjabi Fiction	33
5	Contribution to Punjabi Drama	42
6	As Journalist	49
7	Miscellaneous Writings	57
8	Philosophy of Life and Love	60
9	Impact on Punjabi Writers	68
	<i>Bibliography</i>	71



LITERARY HERITAGE

THE PERIOD of Gurbakhsh Singh's life falls partly in the pre-Independence era and partly after it. Ever since the English language was introduced by the British in 1935 in schools and colleges there had been considerable impact of it on Punjabi literature. Before the occupation of its territory by the British, Persian had been the court language of Punjab, which had continued as such since several past centuries before it. The literature in Punjabi during that era also came under the impact of Persian and Arabic languages and literatures.

The Muslims came to India in about A. D. 1000 and around this time Punjabi had gradually evolved out of the Apabhransha of the area, which might have been one of the three Paishachis as mentioned by Markandeya, namely Kaikeyi, Shauraseni and Panchala. The earliest writings in Punjabi, for instance, the hymns of the *Adi Granth*, holy Scripture of the Sikhs and *Janam-sakhis*, the traditional biographies of Guru Nanak, were written in Gurmukhi script. Though the Muslims used Persian script for their writings in Punjabi, Gurmukhi remained the script for general use by the local people for the Punjabi language. Guru Nanak's *Patti* establishes that the Gurmukhi script was being used in the Punjab much earlier. It came to be known as Gurmukhi after its adoption for the writings of the Sikh Gurus.

The golden period of Punjabi literature begins with Guru Nanak (1469-1539) and ends with the passing away of the tenth and the last Sikh Guru, Guru Gobind Singh (1666-1708). The only poet of note in the Punjab of the pre-Nanak period is Farid Shakarganj (1173-1265) or Sheikh Farid, one of the leading mystics of the Chishti Order. Because of the purity and sincerity of his mystic fervour, his

poetry was included in the *Adi Granth*, which contains four of his hymns and 112 *shlokas*. Besides the verses of Baba Farid, we find in the *Adi Granth* some references to the *vars* (heroic ballads) written in the pre-Nanak period. A *var* is a typical Punjabi poem, celebrating the exploits of the heroes fighting in the battle-field. A lone specimen of Punjabi prose of the pre-Nanak period found recently is the *Ekadashi Mahatam*.

In Guru Nanak's time, the folk-traditions of the pre-Nanak age were preserved. The religious fervour of the Bhakti Movement manifested itself in the traditional metres. The *vars* were composed by the Sikh Gurus singing the glories of the Almighty, the religious preceptor (*guru*) and the Enlightened person (*gurmukh*). Besides these religious type of *vars*, we have a model *var* of Guru Gobind Singh entitled *Chandi di Var* depicting the battles of Goddess Durga with the demons. The poetry of Guru Nanak is marked by lyrical exuberance, richness of imagery and pointedness of thought. It is chiefly Upanishadic in theme. His masterpiece *Japu* is considered an epitome of the *Adi Granth*. The philosophical thought never overshadows his poetic genius. There are references to all the creeds and sects of his time in his hymns. He wrote in eastern and western Punjabi, western Hindi, Sahaskriti, Persian, etc. His hymns exhibit his knowledge of most of the vernaculars of Northern India. The Gurus who succeeded him elucidated his doctrines and mystic vision in their lyrics. Guru Arjan Dev (1565-1605), the fifth Sikh Guru compiled and edited the *Adi Granth* in 1604 and thereby preserved the poetry of the Sikh Gurus and the mediaeval saints for posterity. The *Adi Granth* is a treasury of old 'Hindui dialects'. The poets whose hymns have been included in it include the radical pre-Nanak period saints like Kabir, Namdeva, Ravidas, the Sufi saint Sheikh Farid and some contemporary mystic poets and bards. The successors of Guru Nanak whose hymns have been included in the *Adi Granth* are Guru Angad Dev, Guru Amar Das, Guru Ram Das, Guru Arjan Dev and Guru Tegh Bahadur. The hymns of Guru Tegh Bahadur were included by the tenth Guru, Guru Gobind Singh.

The poetry of Guru Gobind Singh is contained in the second Sikh Scripture known as the *Dasam Granth* (interpreted as the Book of the Tenth Master). *Chandi di Var* mentioned above forms part of the Scripture. This poem is in Punjabi, while the other works, both mystical and narrative, are mostly in Braj Bhasha. A few poems at the end are in Persian, including the famous letter in verse *Zafamama* (Epistle of Victory), written to Emperor Aurangzeb.

Some scholars believe that the poems which are Pauranic in theme and content are the compositions of the court poets of the Guru. The heroic poetry written by the Guru is superb and exquisite.

During the Nanak era of Punjabi literature, the personality and sayings of Guru Nanak revealed themselves in various literary genres, not only in poetry, but also in prose. Several versions of the life of Guru Nanak, called *Janam-sakhis* appeared in this period. The prominent versions are *Bhai Bale Wali Janam-sakhi*, *Puratan Janam-sakhi*, *Shambhoo Nath Wali Janam Patri Babe Nanak ki*, and *Meharvan Wali Janam-sakhi (Sachkhand Pothi)*. Another *janam-sakhi* written by Bhai Mani Singh belongs to the later Mughal period. Bhai Gurdas was a great elucidator of *guru-bani* during Guru Nanak's times. The representative Sufi poet of the period was Shah Hussain and the representative Qissa poet was Damodar. In the later Mughal period the Sufi poetry culminated in the *kafis* of Bulhe Shah and the *qissa* poetry in the inimitable *Qissa Heer* of Waris Shah. Najabat wrote a *var* of Nadir Shah. Besides *janam-sakhis*, various genres of Punjabi prose which appeared in the Nanak age and the later Mughal period were *sakhis*, *goshtas*, *pamarathas*, *bachan*, *sukhan*, *saar*, *masle*, *teeke*, etc. There were several renderings from Sanskrit and Persian. The Udasi, Nirmala and Sewapanthi saints also made valuable contributions.

There was not much literary activity during the period of Ranjit Singh. A few *qissas* and *vars* were composed. The tradition of *qissa* writing and the composition of mystic poetry continued till the early British period. The Christian missionaries did some exercise in translation and story-writing. Because of the religious preachings of the missionaries, there was a new religious awakening among the Sikhs, Hindus and Muslims. A lot of religious and propaganda literature was written. The work of the Khalsa Tract Society was noteworthy during the Singh Sabha Movement among the Sikhs. Bhai Vir Singh (1872-1957) was a product of this movement, but with a new literary consciousness, owing to the impact of English language and literature.

Bhai Vir Singh was 23 years old when Gurbakhsh Singh was born in 1895. While Vir Singh is considered to be the father of modern Punjabi poetry and prose, in the works of Gurbakhsh Singh, Punjabi prose became a strong vehicle of expression. Vir Singh was inspired by the Sikh religious literature; the same was the literary heritage of Gurbakhsh Singh. But there is a vast difference in their approach. While the work of Vir Singh is an exposition of the religious tenets

and philosophy contained in the works of the Sikh Gurus, Gurbakhsh Singh, in his own alluring style, takes us to a wider compass of the world-theatre and talks about the glorious virtues of Sikhism.

While on a visit to China in 1954, Gurbakhsh Singh in reply to questions about his religion and its founder, said to two Polish tourists--one a writer and the other a painter: "Firstly my Guru very boldly described kings as butchers. Before him, hermits, though have been talking ill of riches and praising poverty, had been accepting the divine right of the kings on the people, so much so, they had been speaking about the duty of the populace to pay taxes. Secondly the Guru considered the worker the king of life. Till then all great people had considered meditation as the only useful thing and the workers who did not get time for meditation had been considering themselves inferior to others. But the Guru gave the worker so much courage that he considered himself at a higher level... When I narrated the story of Malik Bhago and Bhai Lalo, they jumped at the wonderful idea. Drops of milk had oozed out of the bread of Bhai Lalo or not, drops of blood had come out of the bread of Malik Bhago or not--but to compare these two pieces of bread with milk and blood, is to understand clearly the (difference between) labour and exploitation. He had not only pointed towards the philosophy of socialism, but laid out the gist of the Guru's philosophy before Karl Marx... I translated for them several verses from the hymns of the Guru. After listening to them, the tourist, who was a writer told me, "I am not religious, but if I ever were to feel the necessity to be, then I would like to become a disciple of this great Man." The tourist who was a painter, took out his notebook and said that he would like to draw a sketch of Guru Nanak if he could draw a word-picture of his physical personality. (from "Param Manukh")

For Gurbakhsh Singh, Guru Nanak was a poet and a revolutionary preacher. He had brought the message of unity and humanism. His fourth successor, the fifth Nanak, Guru Arjan Dev gave it a practical shape of a universal religion. The evidence of the universality of this religion is *Guru Granth Sahib*, in which Guru Arjan Dev included with great reverence the hymns of saints like Kabir, Namdeva, Ravidas and Baba Farid. Another evidence is the common kitchen of Guru Arjan Dev, in which everybody including untouchables and foreigners was given equal respect. The most noteworthy evidence is the laying down of the foundation stone of *Hari Mandir* (the Golden Temple) by the Muslim saint Mian Mir.

For Gurbakhsh Singh, Guru Gobind Singh was a national hero and the founder of democracy in India. He was a great freedom fighter, an exquisite archer, an invincible swordsman and had the most graceful personality. His poetry is unparalleled. He invited poets and scholars from far away places in the natural, peaceful and inspiring surroundings of Anandpur in order to educate them about the beauties of life. He gave them respect and held meetings with them. He examined and appreciated their works. He got translated the Sanskrit classics into Punjabi and Braj Bhasha. He himself wrote exquisite poetry in several languages. His compositions are marked by extraordinary flow, heroism and swing. *Bachittar Natak* is his mystical autobiography. According to the assessment of literary researchers this work holds a high status among the great works of India. *Chandi di Var* exhibits singular optimism. In the *Japuji* of Guru Nanak there is calm and firm spirituality, but in the *Jaap Sahib* of Guru Gobind Singh there are forceful surges of spirituality. The Guru added the marvel of heroism also in spirituality. In the *Dusam Granth* are included the famous compositions of his time casting impact on the folk-interests, alongwith his own compositions. In several of them there is no spiritual content, although the Guru considered spirituality as the marvel of a healthy human mind, just as the shining greenery enhances the beauty of a healthy plant. Guru Gobind Singh bound together in the form of a bouquet humour, heroism and embellishment and adorned it in the flower-vasé of spirituality (*Sarab-Pakkhi Naaik*).

The above remarks of Gurbakhsh Singh about Guru Nanak Dev, Guru Arjan Dev and Guru Gobind Singh amply show his indebtedness and profound regard for the two Sikh scriptures. For him the Sikh Gurus were the greatest heroes of humanity. His writings révéal the wide range of his reading. He was a widely travelled man. Though he adopted the profession of an engineer, his merit as a writer was still greater. His talent in writing was discovered by an American woman, Mrs. Macatree, when he was serving an engineering company in Youngstown, Ohio.

Gurbakhsh Singh lost his father when he was only eight years old. He was taught Urdu and Persian in school and Gurmukhi at home. During his studies for the Matriculation examination, he had gained good knowledge of English. His father had left behind a small library which contained books in Persian, Urdu and English. There was *Heer* of Waris Shah in Persian characters, a long novel entitled *Afsana-i-Ajaib*, besides several English novels, out of which *East*

Lien was a great favourite. There was also a volume containing a few issues of *Alif*, a magazine of Swami Ram Tirth. The contents of this volume had a great impact on his mind. He was inspired to read the works of Swami Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda. Later in life, a play entitled "Asia da Chanan", based on Edwin Arnold's "Light of Asia" had a great impact on him.

When Gurbakhsh Singh was posted in Iran during the Second World War he met the Bishop of the American Mission, who allowed him the use of his library. He made the best use of his stay there by going through the works of Shakespeare, Shelley, Byron, Keats, Emerson, Longfellow, Wilcox and Walt Whitman. One of the books which left a profound impact upon his mind was the history of the ancient civilisations of Iraq, Egypt, Greece and India. He writes, "This study not only added to my love for the people of the present world, but also gave me knowledge about my unbreakable relations with the people dwelling in forests, caves and trees many centuries earlier. The first song that man sang, the first picture that the man drew, the first ornament (the necklace of the teeth of the hunted wild animals) that a woman wore—these simple events of human history kept me awake during nights just as during my boyhood the memory of the meeting of Bharat with Lord Rama in Ramlila, the abduction of Sita by Ravana and the mourning of Lord Rama kept me intoxicated."

During 1922-23, while Gurbakhsh Singh was in America he began writing in English. At that time, he was also reading voraciously Victor Hugo, Maeterlink, Ibsen, Tolstoy, H.G.Wells, Thomas Hardy, Joseph Conrad, Anatol France, Walt Whitman, Emerson, Omar Khayyam, Neitzche, Goethe, Kant and Schiller and many others.

Though Gurbakhsh Singh began writing in English, he was destined to be the greatest prose stylist in his own mother-tongue, i.e. Punjabi. He served his countrymen for more than forty years and his impact on his Punjabi brethren has been immense. He did his best to change the old, feudal and traditional cultural values and has penned down his ideas on aspects of Punjabi culture. He has written on art, literature, education, religion, ethics, health, agriculture, sex, etc. His books reveal the wide range of his reading. He has very often quoted from the eastern and western authorities. He was wide awake to the various movements of his times. His works not only contain the knowledge gained through wide reading but also the personal experience gained through his visits to various

countries. The new values of life and living in America, Russia and other European countries and also the eternal religious values preached by the Sikh Gurus formulated his philosophy of life. His philosophy of love is indebted to American culture and his progressive ideology to the Marxist thought. In various issues of *Preet Lari*, his main vehicle of expression, we find several passages quoted from Emerson, Bernard Shaw, Romain Rolland, Tolstoy, Mezzini, Bertrand Russell, Victor Hugo, etc. He has also often referred to the works of Marx and Lenin.

Though most of the writings of Gurbakhsh Singh are original, he has done a few translations also. He considered only a few works of western writers worthy of translation for the Punjabi readers and translated the longer narrative poem "Light of Asia" by Edwin Arnold, the free-verse poems of Walt Whitman ("Ghah Dian Patian"), short stories of various writers (*Aakhri Shabad*) and a couple of plays of the French dramatist Moliere (*Moliere de Natak*). In a collection entitled *Ishq Jinhani di Haddin Rachia* he retold the love-stories of Heer-Ranjha, Sohni-Mahiwal, Sassi-Punnu, Mirza-Sahiban, Shirin-Farhad and Laila-Majnu.

Writing about life and literature, Gurbakhsh Singh says, "No art of life is the master of the intellect and as far-sighted as literature. There are no other values of longevity as the literary values. The summit touched by the litterateur in all times, seems untouched even today. Kalidasa, Shakespeare, Goethe, Danté, Whitman, Gorky and Tagore will be considered the masters of human mind and art in all ages. The reason for this is that the litterateur is the judge of the eternal values of humanity and a wizard of words. The eternal values remain unchanged and the word-pictures remain unparalleled. The greatness of human mind, the desire to remain ever afresh, the continued war on traditional values, the longing for going ahead, the firmness against obstacles, the craving for victory over the heart, the love for beauty, the confidence till the end about perfection and victory--these human values remained unchanged and will remain unchanged, and their dealer - literature - will remain immortal." (*Zindgi di Ras te Hor Lekh*).

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LIFE

TWO VOLUMES of the autobiography of Gurbakhsh Singh entitled *Meri Jiwan Kahani* (My Life-Story) were published in 1959 and 1964 respectively. The third volume appeared posthumously in 1978. The first volume covers his life from his birth in 1895 up to 1924, the second volume from 1924 up to 1947 and the third volume from 1947 to 1960. The volumes are, in fact, collections of the articles of Gurbakhsh Singh, written in the form of stories, mentioning the years in which the related significant life-incidents occurred. Thus we have a first hand knowledge of his life from his birth up to 1960. He passed away on August 20, 1977. His son had promised to write and publish the fourth and the final volume two years after the publication of the third volume covering the main events of his life from 1961 to 1977, but his illness and death did not allow him to fulfil his promise. In his preface to the third volume Navtej Singh writes about his father: "When he came, whatever literature, language and life were there in existence, he made great and revolutionary changes in them and brought innovations in all of them. We have his great writings with us today which are still active in moulding our literature, language and life for the better."

Gurbakhsh Singh was born at Sialkot (now in Pakistan) on April 26, 1895 in a middle class Sikh family. He was the first male child in the house of Sardar Pashaura Singh and virtually the first male child after Pashaura Singh, who was also the only child in a family of three brothers. As a result love and attention were lavished upon him by one and all. When he was about eight, his father passed away at the age of thirty-seven. Sardar Pashaura Singh had been a sub-overseer in the Government. However he had taken premature retirement and was trying to establish himself in business when the cruel hands of death snatched him away.

Gurbakhsh Singh received his early education from a primary school in village Fatchabad near Khoaspur, where his father was posted. Later they moved to Amritsar for some time and then to Sialkot. After the death of his father, Gurbakhsh Singh turned very serious and responsible. He worked very hard and passed his Matriculation from Sialkot. He had one elder sister, one younger unmarried sister and two younger brothers, therefore he wanted to discontinue further studies for the sake of earning a livelihood for his family. But his grandfather did not approve of the idea and took the responsibility of his further education. Hence, Gurbakhsh Singh left Sialkot and joined the Forman Christian College at Lahore. But on serious re-thinking he came back and emphatically brought home to his grandfather that he had no right to enhance the anxieties of his elders by not letting him work.

On coming back Gurbakhsh Singh was anxiously in search of a job. At that time the Singh Sabha Movement was in full swing. The session of the Sikh Educational Conference was to be held at Sialkot. The educational committee was in need of an accountant for the upkeep of the accounts of the Conference. Gurbakhsh Singh procured this job on a monthly salary of rupees fifteen only. At that time, this amount was sufficient for a family of four or five. Shortly after taking up the job, he was married in 1912 to Shivdayee, with whom he was betrothed since infancy. The mother of his wife was a close friend of his mother, a cousin of Baba Kharak Singh, the prominent Sikh freedom-fighter. After marriage Shivdayee was renamed Jagjit Kaur whom Gurbakhsh Singh lovingly addressed as 'Jeeti' in his letters. Soon after his marriage Gurbakhsh Singh got employment in the Commissariat at Dera Ismail Khan at a monthly salary of rupees thirty. This place was far away from his home town. However, he left this service within a few months and appeared for admission test for the training of overseers in Roorkee Engineering College and stood first. Thus began his studies at Roorkee. As for the expenses, he sold his wife's ornaments. After successfully completing his studies in 1917, he got his first appointment at Calcutta.

The First World War which had started in 1914 was in full swing at that time. In order to see the outside world, Gurbakhsh Singh applied for the post of engineer in a war-area. His application was accepted and he was asked to proceed to Basra in Iraq. After a short stay at Basra, he was transferred to Baghdad. Shortly afterwards on a demand for an able and trained supervisor from Iran, he was

posted at Kirman. From Kirman, he was transferred to the Headquarters. On November 11, 1918, news reached about the end of the war. Meanwhile he had been introduced to Rev. Stead of the American Mission, who was a graduate of the Michigan University. Stead, on Gurbakhsh Singh's request recommended him for admission in that University. The authorities of the University considered his request very sympathetically. Since his term of service had come to an end, he left Iran for India. He had saved enough money for a passage to America, where he intended continuing his further studies.

On reaching America Professor Riggs of Michigan University helped him to get a part-time job. He worked very hard and at the same time studied for a degree in Bachelor of Science in Engineering (Civil Engineering). Later he got a job in an engineering company in Youngstown, Ohio.

At Youngstown an incident proved a godsend for him. He was disallowed from sitting in a cinema hall with his turban on. Out of protest, he sent a letter to the local paper *Vindicator* under the caption "A foreigner at your doorstep". He received several letters of sympathy. One letter was from a Mrs. Macatree, who invited him to her house. This lady inspired him to write and under her inspiration, he studied the works of several authors and also wrote a few essays, short stories and plays in English, which were later translated into Punjabi. Subsequently he left Youngstown and came to Detroit. Thereafter he visited Niagara, Washington and other places and later boarded a ship for London. This time, he saw the people of London very closely and also visited France, Germany, Austria, Italy, Switzerland and other States on the continent before returning to India.

When Gurbakhsh Singh returned to Sialkot, it had become the centre-point of the Akali Movement. The President of the Akali Dal, Kharak Singh, who was his relative, was in jail. Gurbakhsh Singh was badly in need of a job. He applied at several places and met several high-ups. It was after great deal of struggle that he got a job in the Railways. He was posted at Dohad, where he served for two years. Just as he was planning to go on leave to Kashmir for two months, he got his new appointment in North-Western Railway. From Dohad, he proceeded to Quetta. After some time, he was transferred to Nowshera, where he spent about four years. In his autobiography, Gurbakhsh Singh writes: "The period of four years which I spent here, is the revolutionary period of my life. The

decisions of becoming a peasant from an engineer and a writer from a peasant, were taken here." The Indian Independence Movement was gaining momentum and in this atmosphere, he felt an aversion for the Government service.

On the banks of Kabul river near Nowshera, in the village Sabaak, there is the Samadh of Akali Phoola Singh. Several hundred acres of land were attached to it. Gurbakhsh Singh had seen the working of tractors, therefore he decided to take a long leave and make an experiment of co-operative farming on this land. The work was begun, but at the end of his two months leave, he was transferred to Chiniot bridge, which was then under construction. After the completion of the bridge, he was transferred to Bahawalpur. Because of financial stress, the railway authorities decided to stop new construction. It was a godsend for Gurbakhsh Singh, because he himself wanted to leave the service for the new experiment at the Samadh of Akali Phoola Singh. But very soon he was disillusioned, because of the very slow progress in this new venture.

A foreigner friend inspired Gurbakhsh Singh to start a monthly magazine and thus *Preet Lari* (Chain of Love) came into being. The first issue came out in September 1933. It was received with great appreciation and warmth during the first year. But soon he had to face a lot of criticism because of his bold critical ideas regarding religious dogmatism. A few professors and intellectuals came to his rescue but he decided to leave Samadh Akali Phoola Singh because of its religious connections. From Samadh Akali Phoola Singh, Gurbakhsh Singh shifted to Model Town, Lahore in 1936. Here he mooted the idea of "Sansar Preet Mandal". This society was registered and after registration, several persons gathered around him in Model Town, including the famous Punjabi novelist Nanak Singh alongwith his family. The adjoining areas were combed for a suitable spot where the home and the offices of the society could be located. Ultimately the site near Lopoke in Amritsar district was selected for the purpose. The place was named "Preet Nagar" (Town of Love). In June 1938, Gurbakhsh Singh and his comrades moved to the new place.

At Preet Nagar a community kitchen was opened. All the inmates worked under a discipline. This new experiment was applauded by some and criticised by others. In the second year a model school was started, which was named Activity School. This ideal institution worked till 1947, when the country was partitioned.

Though Gurbakhsh Singh worked very hard for the materialisation of his dreams, adverse circumstances stood in his way. Preet Nagar, as a result of partition, came very near the borderline and because of the disturbing conditions, no work could continue there. In order to save *Preet Lari* from impending closure, its offices had to be shifted elsewhere, though temporarily. With the help of his old admirer, Dr. M. S. Randhawa, the then Deputy Commissioner of Delhi, a spacious building near Qutab Minar, Delhi was taken on rent for two years. Gurbakhsh Singh shifted there alongwith his family and press. Because of uncertain conditions, shifting and establishment of the press at a new place, *Preet Lari* could not be issued for several months. Gurbakhsh Singh writes in the third volume of his autobiography. "*Preet Lari* was published after several months. Writing is the food for the soul of the writer. Though friends had saved me from sinking in the marsh of disappointment, even then the previous bloom of my soul had become a dream for not writing anything for several months. In order to create the vibrations of a new hope, Navtej had especially been reading out to me the news about the freedom struggle in China. The victories of the Chinese fighting for freedom against America and its supporter Chiang-Kai-Shek used to change my mood. The largest country of the world, having the oldest civilisation, with its sixty crores of people would attain Independence. There will be victory of socialism over capitalism. The Soviet Russia and China will together become a citadel of socialism and the foundations of the world-revolution will become firm. This thought gave me strength and reduced my sadness. And when I began to write for *Preet Lari* again, I felt a great change within myself."

In October 1949, Gurbakhsh Singh made up his mind to return to Preet Nagar alongwith his family and press. Within a couple of months, the shifting to Preet Nagar was completed. Having been disillusioned with the American attitude during the Second World War, Gurbakhsh Singh began to write in defence of the exploited people and joined the Peace Movement, which was gaining strength throughout the countries opposed to the Imperialist designs. He was elected President of the Punjab Peace Committee in July 1950 and one of the vice-presidents of All-India Peace Council, in April 1951. In 1951, he was honoured by the Pepsu Government for his contribution to his mother-tongue through his writings. In 1952, he participated in the Peace Conference of Asian and Pacific countries held in Beijing in China. By the end of the same year, he attended a

peace Congress in Vienna and during that visit he also went to other European cities including Moscow. In 1954, when the Indo-China Friendship Committee invited a delegation from India, he was one of the members of the delegation. In December 1956, a Conference of Asian writers was held at Delhi, in which Gurbakhsh Singh participated. He invited the members of the Soviet delegation to Preet Nagar, who came in the beginning of 1957. The second conference of Asian and African writers was held at Tashkent, the capital of Soviet Uzbekistan. Gurbakhsh Singh visited it as a member of the Indian delegation. Most of the discussions in this Conference were against colonialism. After the conference Gurbakhsh Singh visited Samarkand, Rumania and Hungary, where he met several literary luminaries.

In 1970, when Gurbakhsh Singh was seventy-five, he was presented a commemoration volume, containing articles on various aspects of his life and work. He continued writing for *Preet Lari* till the very end. His last book, a novel, *Rukhan di Jeerand* was published in 1973. Alongwith *Preet Lari*, he started *Bal Sandesh*, a magazine for children. In the last few years of his life, his health began to decline, but mentally he was alert till the end. He suffered a heart attack on August 2, 1977 and was taken to Chandigarh for treatment. But a second heart attack, which followed on August 20, 1977 proved fatal.

After his death, his son Navtej Singh continued the publication of *Preet Lari* and on his death in 1981, the publication of the magazine was continued by his son for some time. *Bal Sandesh*, still continued under the editorship of Hirdepal Singh, the younger son of Gurbakhsh Singh. Two of his books appeared posthumously: *Meri Jiwan Kahani* edited by Navtej Singh in 1978 and *Chithian Jeetan de Nan* edited by Dr. Harbhajan Singh in the same year.

Though Gurbakhsh Singh had travelled widely his roots lay in his home state, Punjab, which he served in various capacities, as an engineer, as a co-operative farmer and as a writer. He had visions of a prosperous country free of poverty and want. Though most of his dreams remained unrealised, his persistence in the realisation of his dreams, his acumen, his grit and fortitude are commendable. He was a preacher of goodness and beauty. His philosophy of love is unique, which is evident from his writings.

Dr. Mohinder Singh Randhawa, a great friend and admirer of Gurbakhsh Singh, has written about him: "Most of the dreams of Gurbakhsh Singh have not been fulfilled, but his unfulfilled dreams

have given several new inspirations to thousands. He created a prose-style in Punjabi, simple and understandable. He exhibited the vastness of Science to Punjabis, while taking them out of the sphere of narrow-mindedness. The imprint of the seal of Gurbakhsh Singh will always be there on Punjabi Language, Literature and Culture.”

CONTRIBUTION TO PUNJABI PROSE

GURBAKSH SINGH is considered to be the greatest modern Punjabi prose stylist. Though Bhai Vir Singh and Principal Teja Singh had taken Punjabi prose out of the traditional mode of writing and made it a vehicle of philosophical, intellectual, rational and facile expression, Gurbakhsh Singh touched the heart of the populace by bringing to the fore matters and issues of common interest. He began writing with the zeal of a reformer, awakening his readers to new horizons.

In the field of Punjabi prose, though Gurbakhsh Singh has tried his hand in biography, autobiography and travelogue, his forte is essays. Of his numerous collections of essays though *Bandi Chhor Guru Nanak* and *Sarab-Pakkhi Nayak* appear to be biographies of Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh, they are, in fact collections of essays on their life and work. *Meri Jiwan Kahani*, the autobiography of Gurbakhsh Singh, is in three volumes and contains events of his life from 1895 to 1960.

A close look at the titles of some of his books gives us a glimpse of the trend of his writings. *Preet* (Love), *Rozana Zindgi* (Everyday Life), *Param Manukh* (Great Man), *Pran Pustak* (Book of Promises), *Sadi Honi* (Our Destiny), *Abhul Yadan* (Unforgettable Memories), *Prasann Lammi Ummar* (A Happy Long Life), *Supne* (Dreams), *Swai-Puranta* (Self-Perfection), *Changeri Duniya* (A Better World), *Sade Waris* (Our Inheritors), *Nawan Shivala* (A New Temple), *Qudrati Mazhab* (Natural Religion), *Bhakhdi Jiwan Changiari* (A Live Spark of Life), *Navin Takri Duniya* (A New Strong World), *Khushhal Jiwan* (A Happy Life), *Reejhan* (Wishes), *Zindgi di Raas* (Drama of Life), *Nayak* (Hero) and *Navian Taqdeeran* (New Destinies). Gurbakhsh Singh had witnessed various communal and religious prejudices on the Indian sub-continent and

their exploitation by the British in order to keep their firm hold on the country. Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs, the three communities in the Punjab, in the name of propagating their past glory, were in fact, injecting communal venom amongst their fellow brethren. In his very first publication, *Preet Marag* (The Path of Love) Gurbakhsh Singh writes: "All the religions have been making great efforts in propagating their ideals. In newspapers, books, and conferences, preachers are propagating their religions on various occasions like births, deaths, marriages, etc., but discord, malice, hatred, strife, scorn and slavery are increasing in the same proportion. From this the wise have felt that the speed with which this religious horse is galloping today, it will shortly fall flat in some abyss." India was at that time under the subjugation of the British. The slavish mentality of the people had corrupted the life-style. The binding force, that is, Love, was not there. He had witnessed and experienced a totally new life-style in America, where he had lived for several years and wanted to instil those virtues among Indians through his writings. He propagated especially his concept of platonic love, which will be discussed in a separate chapter.

Gurbakhsh Singh expressed his appreciation of the American way of life in the following manner: "In 1919, after a journey of thousands of miles, I had reached the hospitable portals of the United States of America. I still remember my diffidence at that time. The foreign government in my own country, had instilled in me the inferiority complex. But I felt that the splendid libraries, laboratories, clubs and lecture-halls of this country had created within me a new insight, a new boldness and a new thinking." In 1924, when he left America there was a queer love surging within him for the people of that land and his own country seemed alien to him. When Gurbakhsh Singh came back to India he spoke about the qualities of the Americans to everyone. Not only this, every issue of *Preet Lari* contained praises of the American way of life. Some people called this appreciation mere exaggeration and the impact of Westernism upon him. They reminded him of the sad plight of the Negroes in America and drew his attention towards colour and racial-prejudices there. They even referred to the immorality and poverty life in Chicago and New York. To all of them, his reply was: "Whatever you say, is correct but whatever I have said, is also not wrong. My mind had suffered much on the lynching of the Negroes, but I had taken no notice of it, because in my own country nine crore untouchables were being treated more harshly than the Negroes.

There I saw some Negroes being appointed as judges of the High Court, but in my own country the untouchables, leave alone anything else, are even not allowed to walk on the same road on which the so called high-caste people walk. I agree even having witnessed scenes of great poverty in New York. But I did not even take any notice of them, because I had seen utmost poverty in my own country. Moreover, at that time, I considered poverty as something incurable. Till then I had not understood the philosophy of universal prosperity, and neither had I yet got acquainted with socialism. For me the visible human cord passing through the overall American life elicited a spontaneous wonder from my heart. The widespread devotion of 'being, becoming and doing', which I came across there, had been the subject of my songs for several years."

Gurbakhsh Singh yearned for love and happiness everywhere. This was possible if the higher ideals in life were imbibed. Two of his books, namely, *Sanwin Padhri Zindgi* (Balanced Life) and *Sukhawin Sudhri Zindgi* (Comfortable and Reformed Life) are dedicated to this subject. The themes of the first book are happiness, love, perfect society; art of living, art of speaking, success, death, etc. Gurbakhsh Singh emphasised that the attainment of happiness is the chief object of our life. "That life seems to me most successful and pure in which there is no dissatisfaction, no piercing sting for any one; in which the primary aim of life is the desire to be happy, in which there is no desire to intimidate others, no pride for the ruling class, so much so that there is no haste in asking for justice. There should be a desire to be of use to others, there should be vibrations in every limb for love, there should be the healing magic in speech and there should be a smile of eternal good wishes in the eyes." For Gurbakhsh Singh, the perfect society will think more of sentiments than things. People will shun hatred. Mercy, charity and appreciation will be considered decorations of human nature. The chief constituents of life are marriage, family, neighbours, love, religion, death, sorrows and pleasures. They are also the main sources of human happiness. There are four fundamental means of success: self-criticism, unity of purpose, self-control and character. There are five elements of a balanced life: economic, social, mental, moral and spiritual. If there is no balance with regard to all these elements, life cannot be a pleasant experience. Regarding death Gurbakhsh Singh says, "He who has not understood the nature of death has not understood the significance of life. Those people cannot lead a happy life, who consider death as the end of life. They fear it and weep over it. He

who does not know why the water of his tank of life dries up, may also not know why and whence the cloud of life comes down in the form of rain. He who weeps over the drying up of his tank, cannot know the mystery of whiteness among the dark clouds over his head."

In his book *Sukhawin Sudhri Zindgi*, Gurbakhsh Singh considers life as an amalgam of twenty constituents: God, human being, worship, religion, life before birth, life after death, destiny, incarnations, truth, love, sex, happiness, non-violence, freedom, custom, property, family, patriotism, administration and ideal life. God and the world are like the soul and the body. The body and the soul are two small parts of God. There was no personality before birth and there will be no personality after it. The destiny is not our suffering, we make our own destiny. The feeling of unity with the universe is religion. God does not demand any worship from us. No incarnation is the son, brother or friend of God. The over all reality of the universe is Truth. The feeling of unity of the universe is Love. That is the reason why Love is called God. Sex is an all-pervading and basic necessity of life. The creation of the world depends upon this need. Most of the suffering in the human world is related to it. Happiness is a state of truth, health, peace and tactfulness. It cannot live alone and reveals itself in relation to others. Perfect happiness consists in being one with the whole existence. Non-violence is an ideal of a reformed life. To see a violent action without protesting about it tantamounts to a violent action. There are three types of freedom, viz. social, economic and political. In a healthy society none is allowed with common consent the practice of deceit, unfaithfulness, injustice, falsehood, fraud, bribery, hurting the sentiments of others, violence, etc., so that citizens may according to their nature, love, make friends, express their opinion and propagate their ideas. To become free, one must be economically independent. And this cannot be attained without political freedom. Customs, rites and ceremonies are meant to save us from unnecessary anxieties. But those rites which enslave us instead of giving us freedom, are to be discarded. The institution of property has lost its utility. Children must not be left any property because many a promising child has been ruined by this institution. In the family, the father should not make himself a model for his child and opportunities for new objectives must be created for them. The child whose destiny is no different from that of its parents, is an unsuccessful experiment. That nation may be considered civilised,

which loves its own country. In a good administration, every individual is free to work and utilise his earnings. The officers of the good government are public servants. The members of the society should have high ideals.

Gurbakhsh Singh has discussed in *Sanwin Padhri Zindgi* several important aspects of life. For him the world is not an abode of suffering. Only a reformed life is a happy life. The author has enumerated certain qualities for a reformed and ideal life, which have been discussed in detail in his book *Fran Pustak*. This work is a practical handbook on how to build a good personality.

Besides the various problems of life Gurbakhsh Singh has dealt with the subject of evolution of personality in his books *Manohar Shakhsiat* (Attractive Personality) and *Swai-Puranta di Lagan* (The Desire for Self-Perfection). The second book entitled *Swai-Puranta di Lagan* deals with subjects like gracefulness better life, self-perfection selection of profession, the art of life, the value of time, cleanliness, hypocrisy, auto-suggestion, idealism, to subdue or to dress ego, simplicity, social evil, concentration, discipline, crookedness, friends, self-help, self-control, etc. Writing about self-perfection, the author says, "The person longing for perfection gives no weightage to fame and wealth. They are considered desirable because it is thought that they are the signs of perfection. Ordinary people, considering the famous and wealthy person as perfect, give him respect. Under this misconception, an ordinary person becomes a worshipper of wealth and fame. In reality, he is desirous of the attainment of perfection. But when his desire takes the right form, wealth loses its significance for him and fame becomes an obstacle. A healthy body, an alert mind, a radical and liberal thinking, spiritual knowledge, worldly wishes, control over desires are the attributes of an attractive personality. Which other gift can be compared with a fearless, self-less, capable and attractive personality? And how can these qualities be obtained without continuous personal efforts? They cannot be earned through the membership of a Party or by becoming an inhabitant of an independent and wealthy country."

Visions of Gurbakhsh Singh about an ideal world are recorded in his book *Ik Duniya de Teran Supne* (Thirteen Dreams of a World). Each dream represents one year of his life. For thirteen years he had been writing about a better world and a better way of life. He referred to his ideas about different subjects in his 'dreams'. At the beginning of each new year he gave a message full of idealism, a message full of new hopes and new aspirations. In 1938, for example,

he inspired his countrymen for a new insight, new love, new desires and new ideas. In 1942, he conveyed the new throbbings for a greater personality, greater village, greater India and greater humanity. In 1944, he imagined for the new year a New Age, in which the main coins would be full-bloodedness, the desire for a fuller life, the pride of living, happiness, freedom, and fearlessness. Such were the dreams of the writer.

Gurbakhsh Singh's views on Natural Religion are contained in his book *Qudrati Mazhab*. According to his concept of it anybody can profess it regardless of his caste or beliefs. There is no special book on which its laws are to be found nor any prophet or incarnation for it. It is a natural truth above all the Scriptures. That person can be called a believer of natural religion, who is healthy and intelligent and whose family happiness does not come in conflict with the happiness of overall existence. Writing about Natural Religion, the author says: "Natural Religion creates a living faith, quite different from the mechanical faith of revealed books. Its foundation is based on this conviction that the faith which is not above suspicion is to be rejected. There is to be no belief in miracles and spirits. There is no place for priests in this religion. Moreover, there can be no practice of a definite mode of worship in this religion. This religion teaches morality, softens the mind with human love, increases the idea of oneness and reduces the sense of possession. It gives bliss, increases grace and courage and teaches respect for the rights of others."

Gurbakhsh Singh has expounded his theory about a strong and better world in his two books *Navin Takri Duniya* (A New Strong World) and *Changeri Duniya* (Better World). In the first book, the writer presents his concepts of the New World, which he calls 'Utopia' and its society 'Utopian'. "The New World" he says, will be so strong and so brimful that the desire to live will not be considered significant; the desire for power will also become redundant, because the desire for power is born out of the need for keeping control over the sources. The desire for self-expression is eternal and in the fuller world, there will be no end to the sources for it, therefore there will be no need of conflict with any one for self-expression and the entire humanity, busy in self-expression will become an abode of beauty and love. Beauty and love are the final climax of human life. The most significant essay in this book is "A Scientific View of the New Strong World". The writer has described the six main currents of human history, which are, in fact, the evolution of human society. The first stage is Tribalism, which is followed by Feudalism,

Capitalism, Imperialism, Socialism and Communism. The fundamental human rights mentioned in the book are: The right to do work, right to comfort and leisure, right to financial security, the right to education, equal rights for men and women, equal rights of nations and sects, freedom of conscience and political freedom.

In *Changeri Duniya* he envisages a better world and not the ideal one presented in *Navin Takri Duniya*. The demands for the materialisation of this world include the provision of the basic necessities of life, employment, safety from violence, opportunities for getting education, medical facilities, freedom to choose one's companions, receive one's due respect in society and freedom from fear. Writing about the Better World, Gurbakhsh Singh says, "The safety of the masses lies in the change of values. It is necessary to enforce new values in the place of old ones which have proved to be wrong. Temples, mosques, God, incarnation, prophet, intuition, the future and past lives, homeland, foreign land, sex, morality—it is necessary to check the beliefs regarding all of them. Wherever there is need of change, the same may be effected immediately. Every belief should be rubbed on the touchstone of the better world. That which is not found up to the mark, may be thrown out of the sphere of life."

Gurbakhsh Singh has devoted his book *Khulha Dar* (Open Door) towards the amelioration of the lot of women. In his Preface to this book he writes: "Only the woman practising free ideals in free life can be faithful and produce a brave family. None can take pride in becoming the man of that woman who is an unfaithful woman. Why should he bear the anguish of being jealous for her? The faithfulness of an independent woman is the greatest treasure for a man to possess. Gurbakhsh Singh considers woman as a nation-builder. The political or moral condition of a country is a reflection of the status of its women. The country where women are not respected, where she has no rights or dignity, where she has no freedom, the overall level of morality in that country will be very low, even though a hundred Gandhis may take birth there. That country will not become independent till the time when its women are considered possessions, which may be taken care of and put within four walls and veils in order to protect them from evil eyes. Where a woman is forced by religious law to be kept under the care of her son, brother, husband or some other male relative, there manhood disappears alongwith womanhood.

Gurbakhsh Singh's *Sade Waris* (Our Inheritors) is devoted to the cause of children. Parents, he feels, have a great responsibility towards their wards. It is their duty to make them accomplished. This can be done through good education and discipline. Because of the negligence of parents, children often tend to fall prey to several evils. The environment at home has a great role in shaping the future of a child. Teachers also play a vital role in the balanced growth of their students. Gurbakhsh Singh lays great stress on character, freedom, courage and happiness. In his preface to *Sade Waris*, he says, "It is useless to leave property to children. The best use of the money would be to give them to best possible education and training. By no means they should be deprived of that, but of course well within the means of the parents. The most desirable qualities in a child are grace, charm and good manners.

Two books which contain Gurbakhsh Singh's thoughts on art of living are *Prasann Lammi Ummar* (A Happy Long Life) and *Bhakhdi Jiwan Changiari* (A Live Spark of Life). The first book deals with physical culture. In order to lead a happy and long life, a definite discipline has to be followed. Primarily, there must be a will to live. For a beautiful and healthy body, we have not only to think about the upkeep of the health of every limb of our body, but also to select simple and nourishing foods for the growth of our body. There are three objects of physical exercise: Health, Vitality and Beauty. Our blood is the stream of our life. For a long and happy life, three conditions are considered essential: to be children of healthy parents, an optimistic happy viewpoint and knowledge about the functions of the body and the laws of its health.

In *Bhakhdi Jiwan Changiari* Gurbakhsh Singh analyses the concept a charming life and graceful body. In his Preface, the author says, "It is correct that the spark of life cannot be kept enkindled by a person alone with his own efforts, just as a lone person cannot be free from the anxiety of procuring water, where there is neither any well nor any stream. And if all the people of that place build a dam with their combined effort and accumulate the rain-water in the form of a lake, then all the people can be free from the worry of water... The enkindled zeal can create something and for this enkindled zeal, the warmth of happiness is necessary. The soul deprived of happiness becomes diseased and unproductive. If health is an important constructive power of life, then happiness is the pronouncement of health. The ideal life is there where a balanced physical and mental state exists. A balanced state means the state in

which the body, brain and the mind are attuned to one's self and the surroundings."

However, there was a great change in the ideology of Gurbakhsh Singh after the Second World War. Earlier he had been eulogising the American way of life but when America dropped the atom bomb on Japan, killing and maiming millions, Gurbakhsh Singh felt heavily let down. In the third volume of his autobiography he writes "The critics conveyed to me the American action in the Phillipine island. However, I could forgive such self-interest of the Americans easily against the British Imperialists. Till the end of the Second World War, I had been praising the American institutions and American people for their simplicity, honesty, hard work and optimism. I had a profound indignation for the British Government; it was not possible for me to have my good wishes for it, but when the USA and the Soviet Union became allies of England, then I used to say "The side in which Soviet Russia and the USA are allies will win, because that side is in the right. But after the death of President Roosevelt when the new President Truman in order to show the American power to Soviet Russia and test its new lethal invention, caused the dropping of two atom bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, killing and maiming millions of innocent people, then my disappointment knew no bounds... The country which I had considered the champion of international justice, appeared to me to be the villain of the world-drama."

Subsequently Gurbakhsh Singh joined the Peace Movement and as a member of the Indian Peace Council, he visited the Soviet Union and China. What fastinated him about Russia were its women and children, prices of commodities, speedy construction of useful buildings in new designs and the widespread love for culture among the people. His *Navian Taqdeeran di Phul Kiari* (A Flower-bed of New Destinies), published posthumously in 1978, contains more than forty articles on Russia, written by him between 1941 and 1973. In his article 'The Flower-bed of New Destinies on the Grave of Capitalism' he has given his impressions about Soviet Russia. Writing about religion in Russia, he says: "Having many misunderstandings about it we made profound enquiries in this connection. We met priests, bishops, deans, Nabis and Mullahs and came to the conclusion that only a secular government can do justice to all the religions. Religion is not taught in public schools, but the churches have their own schools. The child who has finished his education in a public school, can get education on religion in a

church-school. There are religious newspapers and magazines, which are issued by the religious institutions. The repairs of churches and mosques are done by the government. The expenditure on the salaries etc. of the priests is incurred by the devotees. There are no enquiries about religion, when one seeks employment."

The prose works written by Gurbakhsh Singh are mostly collections of his essays published earlier in *Preet Lari*. These essays mainly fall into four categories, viz. those dealing with fundamental human values, especially love; (ii) those dealing with the qualities and virtues necessary for a good personality; those containing his impressions about various countries and their peoples; and those dealing with art, literature and their critical analysis. Gurbakhsh Singh has written on a variety of themes. His references to great writers and personalities are drawn from several great literatures and philosophies of the world. Since he had widely travelled, his work is marked by a variety of experience and multi-faceted spectrum of ideas. About his own writing, he says, "I have never written for myself or others. Every part of my writing is a protest both direct and indirect against the wrong values of society. I am sure that there is no other suffering in human destiny except the wrong values propagated by man. Life for every one is an interesting experience both for the rich and the poor. There was no affliction before life and there will be none after it. Man has himself knit the net of afflictions with wrong values and wrong estimates. Whenever he will take courage to break this net, life will become a unique experience for him."

The essays of Gurbakhsh Singh are not "loose sally of the mind" but are compact creations, giving the impression of a "united whole". Very often he begins with a topical paragraph, which casts its glow on the mind of the reader. The association of ideas continues and the reader is kept absorbed in the subject, giving him a tasteful meal of attractive thoughts clad in appropriate and comprehensible diction. The writer is methodical and rational, but his figurative language very often makes him poetic. He is a juggler of words and a wizard of ideas. His approach is original. His concluding paragraph sums up his ideas in an artistic manner. Gurbakhsh Singh's dreams about an ideal world spread his magic for the reader, who enters the new domain created by the writer, considering it the land of his own dreams.

Under the impact of western thought Gurbakhsh Singh spoke against the formalism and ritualism of the established religion, which

created several adversaries for him. He came into conflict with religious-minded Sikhs in the Punjab, when he published his book *Param Manukh*. This book contained his articles about Guru Nanak Dev, Guru Arjan Dev and Guru Gobind Singh. Though he wrote according to the spirit of *Gurubani*, the followers of the established religion totally misunderstood and misinterpreted him. But the Sikh savants, who understood the import of his writings, came to his rescue. Bhai Sahib Sher Singh of Kashmir wrote in the *Akali Patrika* of March 15, 1935, "I am sorry to know that in some quarters well-intended remarks are the subject matter of criticism. I hope it will not discourage the Editor (of *Preet Lari*)."¹ What he wrote was certainly in good taste and not intended to rouse the ill feelings attributed to it. No two men look at the same matter alike; small differences are bound to creep in and in the long run it is the good intention that prevails... *Preet Lari* has been giving us many things new, modern and suited to our present needs. The Tenth Guru did indeed intend a New Religion –new in the sense that it will be free from any personal strain, otherwise all religions are one at heart... we differ only in the outer details. Later on, when the storm had subsided, Gurbakhsh Singh published two books *Bandi Chhor Guru Nanak*, a book on Guru Nanak Dev and *Sarab-Pakkhi Nayak*, a book on Guru Gobind Singh. Though these books are mistaken for biographies, they are actually collections of essays written on various occasions.

Meri Jiwan Kahani, his autobiography, published in three volumes, also contains collections of essays, written in different years. The same may be said about his travelogue entitled *Ik Jhat Purab Pachham te* (A Glance at East and West). The narration is full of interesting details. It is both informative and instructive.

Throughout his writings we feel the impress of his personality. The figurative language used by him portrays various images before our eyes. The vocabulary is at his command. He does not hesitate to pick up suitable words from Hindi, Urdu and English. He translates the idioms and idiomatic phrases from other languages. He writes short sentences with words modelled and fashioned masterly. With economy of words, his narration becomes forceful. There is a flow in his writing. As the chain of his thoughts advances, the interest of the reader continues unabated and does not diminish. His arguments are convincing and his thoughts express a definite philosophy.

In an article entitled "How I Write?" in the January 1960 issue of *Alochna*, Gurbakhsh Singh writes, "The fundamental inspiration of

my writing is the hunger for love, but just as I am not satisfied with a meal alone, I bring flowers for my dining room after a good deal of selection and want to be served in a shining salver with pleasant faces around me, in the same manner mere writing cannot satisfy my hunger for love. I like good words, words which are simple and full of cadence. I have always been doubtful about the usefulness of ornamentation of words. I admire woman, but the woman wearing ornaments does not create vibrations in my soul. Similarly those words are jarring to my ears which are not under the auric weight of scholarship and have no solemnity of religious purity, which are only the sobbings of a loving heart or its rapture. I have no racial or regional fanaticism about these words. Any word, which can express some affected gait or movement or desire of the heart, I accept its indebtedness. Neither scholarship nor eminence is my ideal. Words are not my love, I needle with them the necklace of my love and put it around the neck of my beloved. I am their debtor, admirer, but not worshipper... Before day breaks at about four o'clock, when the whole house is asleep, I get ready for the "love-meeting" and come silently and sit at my table. By getting ready I mean brushing my hair and beard eagerly, washing my face and changing my clothes, I begin writing, always remembering that I have to write a love-letter, sitting before my sweetheart. I write every letter twice. First time, just as the thoughts come to me I cause them to flow from the lips of my pen in the same manner... and then some hours later or on the second day, I rewrite it. Wherever I had used a light or a heavy word for the want of the appropriate word, I insert the correct after a lot of reflection though it may take much time. During the first draft, I do not halt much and continue writing. The second time I polish each and every line."

CONTRIBUTION TO PUNJABI FICTION

BESIDES MAKING his mark as a prose-stylist, Gurbakhsh Singh also made a name as a writer of prose-fiction. In this domain, he has written both short stories and novels, but his major contribution is towards Punjabi short story. When he began writing short stories, the writers who had been contributing to this literary genre were Charan Singh Shahid, Nanak Singh, Hira Singh Dard, Mohan Singh Vaid, etc. Except for Shahid, all others were disseminators, writing under emotional or reformative stress. Shahid had been writing stories in accordance with the western short-story technique. Gurbakhsh Singh had also come under the impact of western technique, because of his wide reading of western literatures through the medium of English. He wrote a short story in English entitled "Hungry Soul" under the impact of Mrs. Macatree. It was published by the author in his collection *Vina-Vinod* under the title "Bhukkha Sarir te Bhukkhi Atma" (Hungry Body and Hungry Soul.)

Gurbakhsh Singh wrote nine collections of short stories: *Preet Kahanian*, published in 1937, *Anokhe te Ikalle*, published in 1940, *Nag Preet da Jadu*, published in 1940, *Vina-Vinod*, published in 1942, *Preetan di Pehredar*, published in 1946, *Bhabi Maina*, published in 1946, *Shabnam*, published in 1955, *Zindgi Waras Hai*, published in 1960 and *Rang Sehka Dil*, published in 1970. Besides, he has two collections of stories translated and adapted from foreign literatures (1959) entitled *Asmani Mahan Nadi* (1940) and *Aakhri Sabak* (1949). Another collection of stories entitled *Ishq Jinhani di Haddin Rachia* is based on the legendary romances of Punjab.

Having developed a new concept of love *Sahaj Preet* -- he put forward it in his prose works. He also began writing short stories basing them on his new concept. He named his first collection of short stories *Preet Kahanian* (Stories of Love). About *sahaj preet*

(which may be translated into English as Natural Love) he writes, "I cannot say that natural love has given me what many people think the established possessive love can give to the lovers. But I have no doubt about it that natural love has made my life worth living and full of eagerness. I have not demanded possession from love, nor have I asked for my own death or that of my beloved or both. My strong love for life has only demanded a torch for spreading light on the path of life. My first love was with a woman who could not become mine, therefore whatever I could get from this love with that I had been laying stress on the method of keeping myself full throughout my life. And I am satisfied that this method gave me all that was necessary for my emotional prosperity -- and ultimately gave me that peace of mind, in whose stability most of the world seems to be a form of my love. Great men have equated love with God, but I do not know how love for a beloved can be compared with the love of God. And natural love clarified for me this golden reality. When you like someone so much that he/she permeates into your heart and mind then you begin to like most of the world. Your desires related only with yourself changes into devotion for self-sacrifice. Love does not remain a mad impulse, it becomes a spiritual discipline -- a devotion whose first Lord may be a beautiful woman, but gradually everything related with her from far and afar seems beautiful so much so that everything on this earth appears beautiful and men all appear lovable and adorable like the First Lord. This state may be called the state of transformation of love into God. Possessive love, if it is not mixed with something inferior, is a wonderful human emotion, and that love, which is finally transformed into God, does not remain possessive. It becomes *Sahaj Preet* or natural love. This love, for its full satisfaction does not need a sense of possession, constant affection of the beloved and absorption in the soul is sufficient. "About the stories included in *Preet Kahanian* he writes, "These stories are the work of that mental state of mine, in which love was the only torch of my life-aspect. These stories are not the inspiration of any literary art, nor is there any accomplishment of narrating interesting events. It is only an effort to -- tell my contemporaries a cosy experience of my life -- to tell this that for the building of life and propriety of conduct and to feel oneness with the world there is nothing like being in love."

There are eight stories in this collection. It also contains the very first story that he wrote entitled "Pratima" in 1913. Another story, "Zohra", was written during the war in the country of Shirin Farhad

at a time when the author was profoundly in love – up to the point of distraction. “Rita and Cupi”, written in 1924 is the depiction of the youthful passion of the writer. “Gauri te Bhagwan Budh” contains an advocacy for the love censured by all. “Oma te Ohda Anokha Mali” was written in 1927 at a time when love had become an anguish as well as paradise for him. “Ratnavali” is a story narrated by a revolutionary lady. Two stories entitled “Kesri di Gadi” and “Vidhwa Preet” were written at a time, when the agony of love of the writer, in sympathy with unsuccessful loves, had become unbearable. “Kesri di Gadi” was his favourite story. What ever the age, the desire to become the driver of the cart of Kesri welled up within him. In these stories, the writer has, in fact, portrayed his own love story.

His next collection of short stories *Anokhe te Ikalle* (The Rare and the Singular) presents rare and singular characters. Writing about the stories in this collection, the author says “There may be frequent mention of prostitutes and the associated coquetry in our novels, the description of love between husband and wife or betrothed girl, is taboo. At home abusive language may be used in front of daughters and sisters, but it is considered a sin to reveal love between couples. Most of the stories in my book have been taken from life and the impact of this love on the real characters of the stories. I therefore present confidently and unhesitatingly these stories to the public. The writer laments that the values in our society are very strange. Several of our Scriptures cannot be read aloud although they are held in high esteem. Those daily occurrences in our homes which our elders permit and which are a great part of our life, cannot be expressed in the real form.”

This collection contains fourteen stories including his much talked about story “Piar Kabza Nahin, Pehchan Hai” (Love is Not Possession, but Recognition). Prince, the protagonist in the story, preaches the philosophy of natural love. Captain Sweety opposes the ideas of Prince. King is the symbol of material prosperity. Helena, his wife, is the mother of two children, but feels an emptiness in her life. Captain Sweety fills this void with his possessive love – love for the possession of beauty. In spite of it Helena remains dissatisfied. She is a symbol of half-subjugation. Captain Sweety does not want Helena to get closer to Prince, who is a symbol of natural love. But ultimately she finds complete satisfaction only in the company of Prince. Through her Captain Sweety submits to the ideology of Prince. The claim of Prince that “love (natural love) has never

created any disturbance in anyone's life; it has not separated couples, but instead it has brought them closer. This love is nothing but an agreement of faithfulness with life and man," is vindicated.

Two other stories in this collection attract our attention. They are "Prem Poongra" and "Desh Bandhu". The protagonist of both stories is an ideal benevolent person, whose idealism creates for him many enemies.

Other collections of stories published up to 1947 include *Nag Preet da Jadu*, *Vina-Vinod*, *Preetan di Pehredar* and *Bhabi Maina*. The central theme of most of the stories in these collections is again *sahaj preet* or natural love. Some of the stories are based upon the author's personal experiences. There are some stories which have been translated or adapted. The story entitled "Meri Nanhi Lilah" in his collection *Nag Preet da Jadu* is about a small girl whom Gurbakhsh Singh had met while in America. His first story written in English, "Bhukki Atma" was later re-written by him in Punjabi and included in his collection *Vina-Vinod*. In the Introduction to *Vina-Vinod*, he writes "The stories included in this collection were written before 1940. Out of them 'Bhukka Sarir te Bhukki Atman' is my very first short story, written in 1922. It was after reading this story that an American lady encouraged me towards writing. Before the publication of this collection, two collections of stories of love (*Preet Kahanian* and *Anokhe te Ikalle*) had been published. The reception which these stories received from the public has made me believe that even though technique and scholarship are essential attributes of good literature, if any writer puts his whole heart into writing, he will be read widely, even though there may be flaws in the technique. In these stories, my aim is not the exhibition of originality or art, I wanted to make my contemporaries conscious of the social values. Whatever I found supporting my aim, I translated and even adapted. I have seen that most of the sufferings in life are the result of man's own deeds. He has collected a good deal of false notion around his instinct of love under the misconception that it is separate from love and concealed religion in formal worship. In this way love and religion both have lost meaning. Love has become a sin and religion an illusion. It was realised by me that love and religion are one and the same human instinct. Love is the beginning and religion is the destination. Love unites man with man, religion unites man with the whole world. The objective of both is to make man happy by uniting him with his source. With this belief, I have written and translated these stories..."

Apart from being a staunch preacher of the cult of natural love, Gurbakhsh Singh was a reformist too. The ideal characters he has created in his stories are used as tools and their weapons are satire. He has drawn his characters from various strata of society. His characters of love are rare and singular. Such characters in "Preetan di Pehredar", "Khandran di Usari", "Mubina ki Sukina" and "Bam Bahadur" in his collection *Preetan di Pehredar* and in "Bhabi Maina", "Raizada Bidhi Chand", "Neeru di Nardan" and "Pohta Pandhi" in his collection *Bhabi Maina* attract our attention. For social reforms in his own country, the writer is inspired by the cultures of foreign countries. In some of his stories, he has depicted life abroad. For example, the Italian way of life is depicted in his story "Sabar Grisalda", the French in "Anokha Nastak", the Chinese in "Kanwal Kali", and the English in "Rita te Cupi".

Uptil 1947 Gurbakhsh Singh considered the American way of life as the ideal, but after World War II he got disillusioned. This transitional stage is represented by his two collections *Preetan di Pehredar* and *Bhabi Maina* containing traces of his earlier concept of love and the new impact of Peace and Socialism. His stories like "Do Yadgari Ansoo" in *Bhabi Maina*, "Khandran di Usari" and "Mubina ki Sukina" in *Preetan di Pehredar* are a pointer towards this transition. In 1950, when a new edition of *Anokhe te Ikalle* was published, he wrote in his Preface to this edition: "When I read the proofs of some of my stories in this collection, I have felt that they are my work of that time, when the future of humanity was not clear to me as it is now. At that time, the object of my writing was to create sympathy in the middle class people for the victims of violence and also to create a current against the heart-breaking social taboos. But now the people seem to me the greatest conscious power. Such a power cannot be dependent upon sympathy. I have also seen the economic jealousy as the source of social taboos. This jealousy is, undoubtedly, born from economic crisis of the people and ends with economic prosperity." Thus the stories of Gurbakhsh Singh may be said to belong to two periods. The first period ends at 1947 and the second period begins after that.

Gurbakhsh Singh published three collections of original short stories after 1947: *Shabnam*, in 1955, *Zindgi Waras Hai*, in 1960 and *Rang Sehkada Dil*, in 1970. Writing about his new trend in *Shabnam*, the writer says, "My ideal does not consist in writing stories within the frame of formal morality for entertainment. My idea consists in presenting the secret of the new standards of morality and removing

misunderstanding about the old ones. Whatever is putting an impediment to it, it is the duty of the people's writer to point it out even at the cost of his own position. Two of the stories in the collection entitled "Shabnam" and "Radha" portray his own personality in a charming manner. But with such a deliberate attempt, the spontaneity in the story is lost. In his Preface to *Zindgi Waras Hai*, he says: "To some, the extraordinary characters in my stories may appear abnormal. But I have drawn them from the ordinary life around us. There is a lot of things in life which we ignore. Generally the ordinary day to day life remains within our thoughts. But if we take courage to write about the common people, who are somehow extraordinary, I am confident that not only the sphere of life will be widened, but the loneliness in the world will be sufficiently diminished. Being a lover of life, every face appears to me lovely and interesting; for this reason, I feel satisfaction and like self-expression in manifesting the joys and sorrows of its ordinary and extraordinary characters."

The stories written by Gurbakhsh Singh in the second phase are progressive in theme. We find in them the abandonment of the American line of thought and exhibition of the feeling of anguish regarding the Indian scene. After reading these stories, the reader feels that the writer has now actually felt the sad plight of his countrymen. He has tried to delve deep into their problems. In his new stories he clearly speaks against capitalism and eulogises socialism.

From the point of view of technique, Gurbakhsh Singh is, however, not so successful. He himself has admitted it. The reason for this lies in his power of narration and profundity and profuseness of his ideas. Sometimes he goes into unnecessary details in his stories, making them look like novelettes and does not remain within the limits of the plot. To make his stories interesting and appealing, he uses appropriate vocabulary as he does as a prose-stylist. He has an excellent hold on the language and in this he surpasses other writers in this genre. Sometimes his narration borders on the poetic, because he creates very attractive imagery. Like a poet, he bedecks his narration with similes and metaphors. He gives symbolic names to his characters. Dr. S. S. Uppal, the author of *Punjabi Kahanikar* (Punjabi Short Story Writers) has rightly stated, "The main contribution of Gurbakhsh Singh consists in his great role in the growth of Punjabi short story like Nanak Singh. Being one of the

pioneers, he has played a prominent part in its evolution. None of the critics of Punjabi short story can deny this."

Besides short stories, Gurbakhsh Singh has written one novelette and one novel. *Anviahi Maan* (Unmarried Mother) and *Rukkhan di Jirand* (The Power of Toleration of the Trees) respectively. *Anviahi Maan* was first published in *Preet Lari* in 1938, later in *Preet Kahanian* and afterwards in 1942 as an independent book. It was published in revised form in 1956 and 1966. However, it came in for a lot of criticism, when it was published for the fourth time in 1943. The writer wrote an introductory note to it, in which he says: "None of my stories can be read without criticism – because till date, I have not written anything for my own sake. Every part of my writing is a direct or indirect reproach against faulty values. I am confident that there is no suffering in human destiny except his faulty values propagated by him. Life is an interesting event for every one. There had been no affliction before life and there will be none after it. The net of all afflictions has been knit by man himself with faulty values and faulty presumptions. Whenever man takes courage to break this net, his life will become a unique creation." The main character of the novelette is Prabha, who suddenly meets an old classfellow Chitranjan in police custody. He has been falsely implicated in a murder case and is to be hanged the next morning. She accompanies him to the prison and stays with him for the night out of great human sympathy for a person who has fallen a prey to a grave injustice. The writer says: "How much difficult it is to die by hanging, if there is no hope even of a small victory. For giving this hope to Chitranjan, Prabha presents her whole bright future to him, who was nothing to her a short while ago. Prabha could have had a husband according to her wishes. She could have got the approval of the eyes she wanted. Her heart was still a complete whole, her bosom was still her own. But she prepared herself to fill her whole life with the solitary night of a prisoner sentenced to death. If in this decision of Prabha there had been a little of sexual instinct, then she could not have prepared herself for this great sacrifice. Her queer decision clearly indicated that her sexual life will be finished once for all. If after this night she would not like to become defiled, she will have to remain a widow for ever. She considered all the pros and cons and decided to live the life of a widow, if she conceived."

After the death of Chitranjan, when she finds herself pregnant, her father insists on aborting the child but she considers the child in her womb as a trust and prepares herself to face the world with

composure. The writer questions: "How many girls can be found in our society with the strength, sanctity and sacrifice of Prabha? Does the example of Prabha strengthen the character or ruin it?" Prabha also questions protesting in great anger: "Tell me....Tell me....Am I a defiled woman? Why do you not get me justice....What I have done?"

In a way, this novelette is a challenge for the society, which has no place for a girl like Prabha and which cannot honour the beautiful character of Prabha.

Gurbakhsh Singh wrote his novel *Rukhian di Jirand* in 1973. Its theme appears to be an enlarged version of his novelette *Anviahi Maan*. In his introduction to the novel, the writer says, "There are many misunderstandings about my doctrine of love. Some say that it is the cool mutual appreciation of Plato. But he does not see the zeal of owning somebody in it. He does not find the satisfaction of sex in it. Someone considers it as a mere concoction. But for me everything is included in it. Only like nature it is based on permanent principles and ideals. There is extreme warmth in it, unity of souls in it, swing, expectation and intoxication in it. In order to give the character-portrayal to my ideas of love, I have given the form of novel to the emotions of love of real living characters. If th's work of mine can clarify my belief that love is not possession, but it is recognition, if it can expound the secret of the power of toleration of the lovers, then I shall be highly satisfied."

The life-struggle of three ideal characters Paro, Rachna and Dildar is depicted in this novel. The story of the novel spans over three decades. Like many of his stories the theme is the natural love and the refutation of the prevalent social values. The protagonist is Paro, who has been separated from her parents in childhood and is forced by circumstances to become a prostitute. Addison is an English officer who wants the company of a young beautiful girl. Rai Sahib, under obligation from Addison, manages to procure Paro for him. In due course, she develops a natural love for the officer, and sometime later gives birth to a boy, Dildar. Sometime later, the wife of Rai Sahib also gives birth to a daughter, Rachna. When Dildar and Rachna grow up, they fall in love with each other, but Rai Sahib does not want to marry his daughter to the son of a prostitute. The novel on the whole depicts the natural love of Paro, who is very similar to Prabha of *Anviahi Maan*, in that she has a child out of wedlock. The natural love of Dildar and Rachna is also described in detail. The difference between this story and *Anviahi Maan* is that

the story in the novelette ends with the birth of the son of Prabha, but in the novel, Paro's son is shown as the natural lover of Rachna till his death. He also remains unmarried throughout his life. Just as his short stories, his novels also present rare and singular characters. Like his stories, the creation of romance and the power of narration are the chief characteristics of his novels. Among the Punjabi novels, the novels of Gurbakhsh Singh are singular in theme and concept.

CONTRIBUTION TO PUNJABI DRAMA

PUNJAB HAS a long tradition of drama. Traces of theatrical stage were found during the excavations of Harappa and Mohenjodaro. The *Natya Shastra* of Bharat Muni and the Sanskrit dramas of Kalidasa and others are a clear proof of a golden era of stage and Sanskrit drama in north-western India. Because of the frequent incursions of foreign hordes in the Punjab, there was decline in the development of Sanskrit drama. But there developed a tradition of folk drama after the tenth century, when *naqls*, *ras-lilas*, *Ramlilas*, *nautankis*, etc. flourished. Stories of Gopi Chand, Bharthari, etc. were also performed on the folkstage.

In about 1880, Parsi theatrical companies of Bombay came to the Punjab and presented for the first time adaptations of English plays on the stage in Urdu and also dramas based on Pauranic tales and Romantic Qissas. These companies became very popular. Stages were set in several cities and towns. Such a situation prevailed till the end of the nineteenth century. With the establishment of the British rule, a new literary and cultural consciousness emerged. Some Sanskrit and English plays were translated into Punjabi, e.g. *Shakuntalam* of Kalidasa and *Othello*, *Merchant of Venice*, and *Comedy of Errors* of Shakespeare. Original plays were also written.

The first original play to be written in Punjabi was *Supan Natak* by Giani Dit Singh (1849-1898), who also wrote a poetic play entitled *Raj Prabodh Natak*. In 1893, the Christian Mission published a play entitled *Malka Astar*. In 1896, the Khalsa Tract Society published the play *Sukhwanti ate Chintamani*, on the problem of child-marriage. But the first good literary play, though religious and reformatory in content, and deficient from the angle of the stage, was written by Bhai Vir Singh, under the title *Raja Lakhdatta Singh*. During this period, Bawa Budh Singh, Lala Kirpa Sagar and Brij Lal

Shastri also wrote a few plays. Bawa Budh Singh's plays were informative in character, but were not written from the point of view of the stage. The plays of Lala Kirpa Sagar were historical plays interspersed with interesting scenes and light songs. Brij Lal Shastri wrote four plays, two of which were poetic. The stories of these plays were drawn from Indian history and mythology.

But the credit for a reform in the field of Punjabi drama goes to an English lady, Norah Richards. She came to India in 1911 along with her husband, who was a Professor of English at Lahore. She inspired new trends and began the direction of Punjabi plays on the college stage. Professor Ishwar Chander Nanda came under her impact. She directed two plays of his, namely, *Dulhan* and *Bebe Ram Bhajni*. The Saraswati Stage Society was established by her at Lahore in 1914. After the death of her husband, Mrs. Richards came to live at Andhreta in the Kangra Valley till her death. Her continued association was a great inspiration for the Punjabi dramatists.

Professor Ishwar Chander Nanda (1892-1966) is known as the father of modern Punjabi drama. He penetrated deep into the Punjabi society and produced realistic plays. His plays include both one-act as well as full length plays. His plays mostly present the middle class problems and have been staged successfully. Gurbakhsh Singh occupies a prominent place in Punjabi drama after Ishwar Chander Nanda. Whereas Nanda is a realist, Gurbakhsh Singh is an idealist. Though he stands as a unique litterateur in the domain of Punjabi prose and Punjabi short story, still he holds a worthy position as a Punjabi dramatist. He has written one full play and twelve one-act plays. The full play *Rajkumari Latika*, was published in 1935. The one-act plays are: *Preet Mukat* (The Crown of Love), published in 1936, *Preet Mani* (The Jewel of Love), published in 1940, *Purab Pachham* (East and West), published in 1940, *Sadi Honi da Lishkara* (The Flash of Our Destiny), published in 1946, eight one-act plays entitled *Jal-Putri da Viah* (The Marriage of the Daughter of Water), *Do Ratan* (Two Nights), *Chatur Kama* (The Clever Worker), *William Tell*, *Dil Rani*, *Kodhre di Roti* (The Bread of Coarse Grain), *Dodiay Kapah Deeay* (O, the Bud of Cotton) and *Vichharian-Milani Kursi* (The Chair Which Unites the Separated) – all included in the collection of one-act plays entitled, *Kodhre di Roti te hor Ikangi*. No date of publication is given in this collection of one-act plays.

Rajkumari Latika, *Preet Mukat* and *Purab te Pachham* were primarily written for a dramatic club in America in 1923. They were subsequently translated into Punjabi and published in *Preet Lari*'s first volume. They were written when the writer was very young, merely twenty-eight and was obsessed with love and idealism. In his Preface to *Rajkumari Latika*, he writes, "The brief life of Rajkumari Latika is not a story, nor a plot woven for entertainment, it is the flutter of something in the heart hungry for love. The entities like Latika are not born for living or completing some mission, they are the unsuccessful effort for revealing some suppressed truth. They come only to create some motion in their surroundings, to flood new lands with the deep current of life passing through the old banks, to tighten the loose wires of human mind for creating new tunes and causing new loves, new sorrows and new desires. Within them throbs a message of a heart dear to all. After throbbing they die down. They are not like a roadside electric lamp to lighten the path of some passer-by, they are like the flash of lightning in the sky creating a momentary light for the dark world and show path to many seeking right direction."

Through his drama *Rajkumari Latika*, the writer has presented two ideal characters – Latika, the daughter of King Balraj and Mandhir, an educated young man full of reformistic zeal. The people are on the side of Mandhir. The king's men, especially the minister Manmat, are, however, bent upon suppressing the activities of Mandhir. The king's daughter is sympathetic towards the young reformer, who is deliberately wounded by the king's men. With the help of the princess Mandhir is brought to the royal hospital for treatment. The princess falls in love with him. She like her late mother wants the good of her people. Like a creeper (*lata*), she gets the support of a tree (*mandhir*) firmly standing at his place. Knowing the mind of his daughter, the king offers to marry his daughter to Mandhir, provided he puts an end to his reformist activities. Mandhir however rejects the king's offer saying: "Sire, I want to say that the princess is inaccessible for me. Only a few rays from her are life-giving for me. But to be the master of her hand is to catch the fire of the sun. Only her love is a gift from her, which I can take, but not herself." The king then threatens him with dire consequences, if he even dared to come near him. When one day Latika fixes a rendezvous with Mandhir, the king finds out and threatens to shoot him in spite of strong protests from Latika. In a bid to save Mandhir, Latika herself falls prey to the king's bullet. When the

king sees what he has done, he falls down unconscious. The pistol is picked up by Mandhir and with the second bullet he kills himself.

In this play Latika is shown as a very strong character who cannot budge an inch from her ideals. She addresses her attendant Asha in the following manner: "I want to walk along the boundary lines of the green fields. I want to sit at the seat of the Persian wheel. I want to live among those peasants where there is the hut of Mandhir, I want to take his lunch in the fields, I want to wash his clothes, I want to teach the sisters and daughters of his hamlet. I want to be loved by the inhabitants of the whole village. I want to become like a blossomed flower in the village. Asha, I fear the watchmen of the palace... I do not want him to be a king. There are many kings, but Mandhir is rare... These are not the words from my heart, they are the cry of the soul. The soul is invisible, its joys and sorrows are also invisible. Its pleasure is not in the palaces, nor in those fields, nor in the royal splendour, nor in the beautiful body of Mandhir. Mandhir is only the reflection of the desires and yearnings of my past lives. He is the non-verbal answer to my inexpressible message. He is my life and ideal. Whatever the residents within these walls have seen of me, it was my shadow. Mandhir is my reality. I have found out my place. My search in this life is finished. It is useless to go on living.

The ideal of Latika is very well presented in the above quotation. She is much above physical and mental desires. Her natural love for Mandhir is, in fact, the spiritual love which crosses all physical and mental bounds. *Rajkumari Latika* is a play of four acts, with five scenes in the first act, two scenes in the second act, four scenes in the third act and two scenes in the fourth act. The writer has given appropriate names to all his characters.

The plot of *Preet Mukat* is taken from the famous story of Raja Harishchander, who remained firmly on the path of truth throughout his life. The play is however a slight deviation from the original story. Whereas the central character in the original story is Raja Harishchander, the writer of this play has made his wife Tara the chief character. The original story preaches truthful living and reverence for the Guru but the instruction of this play is truthful love and faith in life. The writer places the crown of love on the head of Tara. Although Harishchander has reached a very high stage, his soul appears to be tired with difficult efforts. He had been able to renounce his kingdom and had sacrificed his son and wife; he had the power to speak truth and he could resign to the Will of God.

But Tara had made no less sacrifice. Did she not renounce the kingdom? Did she not resign to the Will of God? Tara had, in fact, reached there, where Harishchander had reached. But Tara had not opposed her nature. She did not sell her husband, nor thrown away her son.

In the play Tara asserts that whosoever is guided by love, he will never be lost. The crown of reputation is on the head of Harishchander, but Tara has the crown of love over her head. Harishchander is a disciple of Vishvamitra, but Tara appears to be the Guru of Vishvamitra. Vishvamitra hails Tara and begs benediction from her. The following speech of Harishchander addressed to Tara in the play is very significant: "O Tara, the solid truth of your love collides with the hollow truth of my words and I hear this sound in this collision. Mere truth of words is not the real truth – It is a habit, may be good, if not bad."

The play revolves round three characters, King Harishchander, his queen Tara and Swami Vishvamitra (as an old man).

Purab Pachham (East and West) too like *Rajkumari Latika* was originally written in English for an American dramatic club. But whereas *Rajkumari Latika* was a tragedy, the organisers of the club had requested him to write the new play in a lighter vein. This play depicts the rashness of American youth today and the cravings of Indian youth. This rashness is not in the character of American youth, it is only an aspect. The Americans however are not much bothered about it and smile it off. This play is not merely a portrayal of the cravings of Indians. It also presents a picture of the womanhood in India and their abject helplessness. Sham Sunder, the only son of Rai Sahib Madan Mohan an England-returned educated youth, already married to an Indian girl, brings with him an English wife and starts living with her separately. His parents are very sore about it. On his pleas for monetary assistance, none other but his Indian wife Madhuri comes to his help, considering him as her own Lord. Ultimately his English wife leaves him and he comes to his senses and afterwards lives happily with his family.

Preet Mani (The Jewel of Love) is a play based upon a real incident. The object is not to lower one's sect or an individual in the eyes of others. It is just to create an awakening about a special viewpoint. The story revolves around a young boy Hirde Nath and a young girl Preet Mani belonging to two different sects who fall in love and want to marry. It is however opposed by the relatives of both of them. One day the girl elopes with her lover. The sect to

which the girl belongs, formulates a committee for pursuing the matter in a court of law. Chittarpati is engaged for giving false evidence in the court that the girl is his wife. Even a doctor is engaged to give false evidence that he had joined the marriage party. Finally, the court of law decides the case in their favour and the girl is forced to go with the fake husband. When Preet Mani prepares herself to commit suicide, the fake husband reveals the falseness of his evidence in the court and the matter ends without a tragedy. The speech of Preet Mani when she takes out the dagger for killing herself, is very significant. She says: "I have seen the justice of the judges, the religion of the religious people and the love of the parents... I refuse to live in such a society... I am a free woman... I shall die as a free woman... My husband, and my child will avenge this violence... Your own daughters will demand a reply from you regarding my blood... I despise your violence..."

Kodhre di Roti te Hor Ikangi contains eight one-act plays. Out of them "Kodhre di Roti" (The Bread of Coarse Grain) and "Do Ratan" (Two Nights) are historical plays. The first is an episode from the life of Guru Nanak Dev and the second from the life of Guru Gobind Singh. Both were the leaders of humanity. In our national history, both these personages have inspired new ideals. They had never been sectarian in their outlook. Their message is for all humanity.

"Kodhre di Roti" differentiates between the bread of the rich person gained through ill means and the bread of the poor earned through honest work. Guru Nanak stays with the honest worker Bhai Lalo, who is a low-caste person. Malik Bhago, the chief of the place invites the Guru to partake food from the rich feast arranged by him. The Guru loves the bread of coarse grain cooked by Bhai Lalo. When the Guru is forced to join the feast, he exhibits to all that the bread of the poor worker contains milk and the bread of the rich chief contains blood. The conclusions drawn from this play are: Humility is a great human symbol. To be absorbed in work is of great significance. The theft of the hard work of others is not less than drinking blood.

"Do Ratan" describes two graceful actions in two different nights. During the first night, a Pathan protects Guru Gobind Singh from the hot pursuit of the Mughal Army. During the second night, at the time of partition the Muslim families are saved at the same place by the Sikh inhabitants, reminding the communal fanatics about the sacrifice of the Pathan at the same place. The conclusions

then can be drawn from this play are: the high morality of hospitality, the gracefulness of human character and oneness of all humanity.

“Jal-Putri da Viah” is the story of a young man, who in a fit of hallucination, has seen the spirit of the girl betrothed to him floating on the water of the lake. The girl had died of snake-bite on the eve of their marriage. He, however, still considers her alive. His extreme love for the daughter of the waters is rewarded ultimately when he is married to his betrothed’s younger sister who is a replica of his betrothed. “Chatur Kama” is an adaptation of a Chinese story. This play not only manifests the harshness of tyranny, but also clarifies the helplessness before destiny. “William Tell” is the story of the Swiss hero and patriot who saved his country from the tyranny of foreign rulers. He was a great archer and a fine marksman. This play creates in us a hatred for alien rule and imbibes in us unbreakable self-confidence, profound love for nature, inconsideration for fame and faith in the power of the people.

“Dil-Rani” presents the story of the fidelity of a princess and the unfaithfulness of the palace-keeper. “Dodiay Kapah Decay” is a short play with cotton-bud, sun, rain, spring and young people as the characters inviting the cotton buds to bloom for the prosperity of the country. “Vichharian-Milani Kursi” takes us back to British India when there was a great attraction for the English way of life among the Indian officers. One couple wants to imitate another couple resulting in domestic disharmony. Ultimately a small accident brings to the fore the defects of the foreign culture and helps in restoring domestic harmony. The eight short plays contained in *Kodhre di Roti te Hor Ikangi* mentioned above, present various aspects of natural love.

“Sadi Honi da Lishkara” (The Flash of Our Destiny) presents the progressive outlook of the writer. It was performed on the stage at Preet Nagar on October 5, 1946 on the occasion of the Annual Meet. The writer has depicted in it the struggle of the workers for their rights. There is an awakening in them and they have the strength to face the designs of the capitalists as well as the religious leaders.

AS JOURNALIST

AFTER THE annexation of Punjab by the British the Christian Missions raised their heads and because of the policy of "divide and rule" by the new Government, there was a confrontation among various religions in the province. The new religious awakening and the establishment of the press were instrumental in the birth of journalism in Punjab. The Singh Sabha Movement created a consciousness among the Sikhs for the propagation of their religion. For this purpose, the publication of Punjabi papers was necessary. The beginning was made with *Gurmukhi Akhbar* by Professor Gurmukh Singh of Oriental College, Lahore. Several other religious, reformatory and educational papers appeared within the last two decades of the nineteenth century. The publication of the prominent Punjabi weekly *Khalsa Samachar* was started in 1899. The Akali Movement and the Indian Independence Movement gave further impetus to Punjabi journalism. In 1926 *Mauji* came into being and a year later *Fateh* was started. These weeklies published articles and poems on diverse subjects and served the cause of Punjabi language and literature greatly. The monthly magazine *Pritam* was started in 1923 and *Phulwari* in 1924. These magazines helped in creating and bringing forth a good number of Punjabi writers to the fore. Several other magazines appeared before the birth of *Preet Lari*, the popular organ started by Gurbakhsh Singh.

It was in 1933 that one of Gurbakhsh Singh's American friends Mr. Harold Iago wrote to him that a collection of short stories published by him, containing his (Gurbakhsh Singh's) story entitled "Fidelity" (*Wafaa*) had been awarded the first prize. He also suggested to him to publish a monthly magazine laying emphasis on the questions of East and West in a better form. In fact, before him several Indian friends had asked him the same. Gurbakhsh Singh

was at this stage hardly acquainted with Punjabi journalism. He had read only two Punjabi books —“Sundari” and “Bijai Singh” of Bhai Vir Singh. He had also heard about the Punjabi weekly *Khalsa Samachar* in which a poem of his had been published in 1911. The editor of the Punjabi monthly magazine *Pritam*, S. Labh Singh Narang, had earlier come to his residence for its subscription. Even this magazine had not created interest in reading books in Punjabi. However, the suggestion of Harold Iago attracted his attention. He writes:

“Though my monthly magazine was still in the womb of imagination, I found for it a name. No sooner did I find a name, I portrayed all its features. I went to Lahore. My kind-hearted drawing master, leaving his government job, had begun the work of block-making there. My teacher had a great appreciation for me. He was very pleased to know my idea and determination. He prepared a tri-colour illustration for *Preet Lari*. I liked it. Wazir Hind Press, was entrusted with the work of the fulfilment of my dream. Five hundred copies of the first issue were printed, two hundred on art paper and three hundred on ordinary Serampore paper. About one third of the issues were in English. Harold Iago used to send me an article for each issue and also conveyed to me the appreciation of American friends. Mrs. Macatree was one of them. The appreciation of Sir Jogindra Singh and Bhai Sahib Bhai Kahn Singh was very warm. Knowing nothing about the methods of literary success, I did not send any copy to the litterateurs and the editors of papers. I sent it only to my well-wishers. But I was highly surprised, when nearly all the Punjabi papers published an appreciative criticism. Dhani Ram Chatrik, Nanak Singh, Sardar G. B. Singh, Gyani Hira Singh Dard, Sardar Charan Singh Shahid, M. S. Randhawa and several other influential and respected litterateurs, read the magazine on their own and wrote letters full of appreciation and love.

“During the first year of *Preet Lari*, I received letters not only of appreciation, but also profound love. Several youthful hearts shared their secrets with me and several high thinkers considered my self-created love a Sufistic enigma. But I had hardly taken a few free breaths of the breeze of appreciation when a storm of slander extirpated my feet from the soil. The story of my blasphemy and agnosticism spread on all sides like wild fire.”

The campaign of slander mentioned here refers to an article entitled “Param Manukh” published in the January 1935 issue of

Preet Lari. In this article, Gurbakhsh Singh had explained the tenth Guru Gobind Singh's concept of true religion, which he wanted to be imbibed by every true devotee. He had spoken against outward symbolism and ritualism. But the explanations and comments of Gurbakhsh Singh were misinterpreted by some persons. Several high ranking Sikh savants like Bhai Jodh Singh and Principal Teja Singh came to his rescue. Ultimately the storm against him subsided, but it had made him wiser and strengthened his resolve to pursue his objectives closely. He writes, "The objective of the publication of *Preet Lari* declared at its very inception, appeared to me insufficient now. I had thought that I would enlighten the people about the significance of love.... but now it was clear that instead of glorifying the splendours of the past, the birth-pangs of a new future had to be started. From the path of life bones of the dead custom had to be first removed. One would have to encounter the frenzy of men clinging like ghosts to old ruins and without any new hopes...one may even have to die in this combat even before the work of construction has begun. The work of the demolition of the ruins is no lesser than a new construction..."

For more than four decades, Gurbakhsh Singh prevailed over Punjabi journalism. His message was received warmly by the Punjabi populace. He was an idealist and for the propagation of his ideals, he wrote freely and frankly. He had a sincere craving in his heart that the standard of life as well as the standard of living of his countrymen should not be less than the modern advanced nations. He wanted the progress of his countrymen on all the planes. In the very first issue of *Preet Lari*, he wrote: "Eight years have passed since I was in America. I had the good fortune of meeting some very graceful personalities. In their company, I established a small brotherhood. The name "*Preet Lari*" was given to this brotherhood. Our objective was to thread together in a common love-link such sympathetic persons, who viewed God in humanity and who considered their happiness in flower-like self-sacrifice, who had no illusion regarding goodness, mercy and patriotism. When I came back to my country, I joined government service. I had many desires and proposals in my mind...My friends asked me several times that I may send a messenger outside in the form of a monthly magazine... But now when I have come out of the narrow walls of the offices and am living in the open fields, I feel a sweet dream within myself. I desire that the love link created in a few hearts should be spread in all directions... This messenger under the name of *Preet Lari* will

reach you every month... The proposal of *Preet Lari* is to make life comfortable, clean, beautiful, full of peace and full of effort through the publication of poems, stories, dramas, translations of Classics and the select ideas of the old and new world. From the point of view of religion, nation, home country and foreign country, this magazine will try to become common to all and shall be radical in giving and accepting opinions. As regards the language, effort will be made to use those common words, which form part of the conversation of educated people. There is no object of profit-making or earning a living through this magazine... I shall be most happy if this messenger is successful in expanding our small brotherhood..."

The distinctive quality of journalism of *Preet Lari* consists in the fact that Gurbakhsh Singh talks directly with his readers, freely and frankly and listens to them attentively. For this purpose, he had reserved a few columns under the caption "Snehian da Panna" (the page for well-wishers). It was very popular with the readers. It will be a matter of great surprise for many readers that in his earlier issues, besides writing prose, short stories and dramas, Gurbakhsh Singh also wrote poetry.

Through *Preet Lari* Gurbakhsh Singh not only talked about the human compassion for the afflicted ones, but also brought into focus the sympathy for animals. It was a rare journalism and a queer pen which felt the agony of the sad and crying young one of the dead dromedary. With the increasing popularity of *Preet Lari*, Gurbakhsh Singh did not remain only Gurbakhsh Singh, he became Gurbakhsh Singh Preet Lari. Gurbakhsh Singh was primarily a journalist and a writer afterwards. Whatever Gurbakhsh Singh wrote, he wrote it for *Preet Lari*. All his essays and short stories and even dramas were first published in *Preet Lari*. Later they were published in the form of collections. Therefore, it often becomes very hard to distinguish the journalist Gurbakhsh Singh from the litterateur Gurbakhsh Singh. His journalistic contribution is, in fact, literature. It goes to the credit of Gurbakhsh Singh that he brought journalism to the level of literature.

Because of his cosmopolitan ideology, the circle of his readers grew, as the time passed. Since his outlook on life was secular, his magazine became popular both within his own province and outside it. The people of Punjabi origin, who had settled abroad, also became the readers of *Preet Lari*. Gurbakhsh Singh did not write for the people of a particular sect or country, he wrote for all humanity.

That was the reason why his paper was avidly read by Sikhs, Hindus, Muslims and Christians alike. There were many people, who could not read Gurmukhi, but they wanted an access to the ideas of Gurbakhsh Singh. Therefore, it was thought advisable to publish the magazine also in Hindi and Urdu – Hindi in Devanagari script and Urdu in Persian script. For English-knowing people, the magazine contained every month a few articles in English. According to an estimate made by Dr. Narinder Singh Kapoor in his research thesis, out of 818 pages of the first ten issues of *Preet Lari*, there were 718 pages in Punjabi (Gurmukhi script) and 100 pages in English. The articles in English were published till the beginning of 1936. The publication of *Preet Lari* in Hindi began in June 1939 with the famous Hindi litterateur Upinder Nath Ashk as the co-editor. But it had to be discontinued shortly afterwards, as Urdu and not Hindi was the second language recognised by the government after English. The Urdu *Preet Lari* in Persian characters was started in August 1939 and its publication continued regularly till August 1947, when the country was partitioned. Gurbakhsh Singh also began the publication of a monthly magazine *Bal Sandesh* for children in 1940. In 1962, the editing of this magazine was entrusted by him to his younger son Hirdepal Singh, who is still continuing its publication. The children books written by Gurbakhsh Singh were first published in *Bal Sandesh*. In order to convey the message of love of Preet Nagar to other people, a weekly paper named *Preet Sainik* was also started on October 10, 1938. The object of this paper was to enlighten people not only about the problems of India, but also to give them knowledge of the international scene. The editorial in the very first issue was entitled "Czechoslovakia and world politics." This paper was meant to create a social, cultural and political awakening among the people. Valuable articles against blind faith and false notions and amelioration of women, child welfare and good living were published. The issues of this weekly were very informative, and had the potentiality of becoming the first ideal weekly in Punjabi, but due to certain compulsions it had to be discontinued.

Preet Lari and other papers edited by Gurbakhsh Singh had a great impact on contemporary magazines and papers. His conversational style had an emotional impact on his readers, who came forward either to become members of the Sansar Preet Mandal, or came to his help whenever the need arose. They wrote letters to him with questions on various subjects. He replied to these

questions through the columns of *Preet Lari* under the caption "Preet Jharokhe Chon" (Through the Ventilator of Love). This column became very popular with the readers. In fact, so much so that when "Preet Jharokhe Chon" did not appear in the September issue of 1977, because of Gurbakhsh Singh's passing away on August 20, 1977 a Professor who was a regular reader of *Preet Lari* and who had also been to the funeral of *Dar Ji* (as Gurbakhsh Singh was lovingly called) began to search for the column "Preet Jharokhe Chon" and when he could not find it, broke down.

Due to the policy of Divide and Rule adopted by the British Rulers, there were communal confrontations every now and then. The papers at that time were mostly communal, which levelled charges of violence against the opposite community and held it responsible for assaults and murders. *Preet Lari* was the only paper which was impartial and preached wisdom and tolerance on such occasions. Whereas other papers created communal venom, *Preet Lari* talked about the real religion of man. Writing about religion in *Preet Lari*, Gurbakhsh Singh says, "Some months back a Punjabi paper had asked me to write an article on the ideal of Gurudwaras. I hesitate to write on religious subjects, because my personal viewpoint is different from the prevailing ideas, but in spite of knowing of my ideas, if the religious papers request me to write on such topics, then I think that the public is more or less interested in my thoughts. With this hope, I had presented my ideas on the ideal of Gurudwaras. I produce them here for my readers. I understand quite well that at present my ideas cannot be put into practice, but the eyes of my mind can visualise the success of these ideas in near future. But till that time when the man does not bring the God's Kingdom in temples and Gurudwaras, he will not realise his ideal. When man will be so full of his trust in God, as he is now with his trust in men, then he will have the signs of God, in his demeanour. At that time man will try to live in the presence of God at all moments. And it is necessary that in such a living, falsehood, greed and ego will drop out and the purity of heart, uselessness of possession and the feeling of oneness with the universe will increase. To-day the religions whose leaders say this that there is none like them and except their co-religionists, the whole world is agnostic and misled, are all atheists. The people whose religious propagation is nothing more than their religious love, they have not at all understood the reality of religion. In my thinking Gurudwaras, temples and mosques should not take this responsibility on them.

that whatever God does not want to do, that can be got done. If God wants a drought, then with their request, there will be rain, or if God does not want, the wombs of mothers will be blessed with conceptions. This is all human foolishness. God knows the needs of all and His Grace does not depend upon recommendations. The duty of religious places is to spread light, to remove fear, to keep physical accidents free from religion, to release the soul from the rule of the matter, to teach co-operation with the society and the world and to broaden the vision of soul." Such was the style of writing of Gurbakhsh Singh in *Preet Lari*. Though the liberal views of Gurbakhsh Singh were opposed tooth and nail by the religious fanatics, his pen never swerved from its objective. This was the reason of his success. He even published the most nasty letter of his opponents in his paper and gave his answers with strong arguments in a civilised language.

Another significant aspect was the inclusion of international problems in the editorial comments every month. Lessons from everyday life were depicted in a very interesting manner. The motto of *Preet Lari* was

The throbbing of a common heart,
The tune of a love-song,
Are exhibited in the pages of *Preet Lari*,
In which are stringed all the things.

The excitement created by the American way of life gradually dwindled in the pages of *Preet Lari* and in 1939, when the Second World War was declared, *Preet Lari* firmly stood against Fascism. After the war, *Preet Lari* contributed greatly to the Peace Movement. There was a marked change in its editorial comments. The Socialist Movement in opposition to Imperialism became its main theme. The circle of its readers increased as the time passed. It achieved a respectable place in the field of journalism on an all-India basis. It inspired many poets and writers to write in Punjabi. The contribution of Gurbakhsh Singh to Punjabi journalism is in content and style both. The subjects which he dealt with in his magazine cover a wide range. The remarks of Dr. Harbhajan Singh, published in the January 1978 issue of *Preet Lari* are significant. He says, "Gurbakhsh Singh is not only a litterateur, but also a journalist. He writes not only on subjects of perennial value, but also on subjects of contemporary significance. From the massage of the body to the

creation of the universal every subject was within his sphere. The difference between literary writing and journalistic writing does not depend on the selection of subjects, it depends upon the presentation of the subjects... The same difference lies between a true litterateur and a writer on culture, one is inclined towards the creation of words and the other towards the creation of life. The Punjabi alphabet, the Punjabi word-building and the Punjabi syntax are matters of little significance for him. Therefore, though he may write on any subject, primarily he loves to write about life. His readers have often complained that though he may write an ordinary article regarding health, or about the complicated political problems, though he may write about Jawahar Lal Nehru or Anju Garu, his style remains the same. His style does not differentiate between the natural actions of everyday life and complicated cultural functions. I have heard several readers talking this fact in jest but this is the fundamental distinction of the person blessed with the grand vision."

Preet Lari is a milestone in Punjabi journalism. The style of Gurbakhsh Singh is not only argumentative, rational, analytical and subjective, it is also refined and graceful. It touches both the intellect as well as the aesthetic sense of the reader. He was master of the art of selection of proper words and expert in producing a vision for the reader by the magic touch of his pen. At times he appears as a great intellectual and other times he appears like a poet, making use of appropriate figures of speech and imagery.

MISCELLANEOUS WRITINGS

BESIDES BEING a prominent Punjabi short story writer, a novelist, a dramatist and a journalist, Gurbakhsh Singh was also a good translator. He has translated numerous poetry, dramas, novels, short stories and prose writing from English into Punjabi. Among his translated works include: *Light of Asia* by Edwin Arnold, *Leaves of Grass* by Walt Whitman, two plays of Moliere, and Gorky's *Mother*.

The works translated by Gurbakhsh Singh come within the sphere of his own ideology. About *Light of Asia* (*Asia da Chanan*) he has written the following introductory remarks: "This book is not one of those, whose mere reading is considered a good act. It is a practical lesson of love, mercy, justice and bright intellect. Therefore, it will always be considered a lighthouse for persons having bright intellect even at that time when the recognition of religion as special religious practice will have ceased. It is one of those few books, which can be read again and again with new interest and which can give new inspiration and instruction...I had read this book in about 1917 in Iran. After that I used to read it before the members of the Preet Club in America. Several Americans had told me that they considered this book as their Bible. Afterwards I published some of its portions in *Preet Lari*. I am glad that the readers of *Preet Lari* liked my imperfect translation, and when no portion was published in an issue, the readers used to write letters to me. Its publication in book-form was also demanded. I know quite well that I have not been able to give the same profound and beautiful form in Punjabi to the profound and very beautiful original of Edwin Arnold... In every verse of this book there is singular love and sympathy. In every verse there is support for the freedom of man."

Leaves of Grass by Walt Whitman was named *Ghah dian Patian* by Gurbakhsh Singh. In 1855 appeared the first edition of *Leaves of Grass*. It was a pamphlet of 12 poems printed by the author. In each revised edition of the book more poems were added. The twelfth edition of the book was published in 1891-92, which was rendered into Punjabi by Gurbakhsh Singh and published in 1968. The style of Whitman is modelled on the rhythm of the Old Testament. It was developed to express the vitality of democratic man, forming a new society. The poet glorified the emergence of the masses and Gurbakhsh Singh liked his ideological approach.

In Punjabi literature, the poet Puran Singh was very much influenced by the poetic style of Walt Whitman. Gurbakhsh Singh has mentioned in the first volume of his autobiography, his meeting in 1928 with Professor Puran Singh. Before meeting him, he had read a book of Puran Singh entitled *Sisters of the Spinning Wheel*. The poet passed away in 1931. In 1933, when Gurbakhsh Singh began to edit, *Preet Lari*, he realised the great loss in the death of the poet. He says, "If at that time, I had been Gurbakhsh Singh of today, I would not have allowed him to depart from my world so soon. In his writing, I found the signs of that madness, which I have been able to conceal and live up to this day. If the two mad men had opened their hearts to each other, then the wise people would have been puzzled." Dr. M. S. Randhawa, a personal friend of Gurbakhsh Singh had also been a great admirer of Puran Singh. In his Preface to "Puran Singh-Jiwani te Kavita", Dr. Randhawa writes: "While in New Delhi, I was associated with Sahitya Akademi's Advisory Board for Punjabi. In the sixth meeting of this Board on May 3, 1960, I suggested that the works of Puran Singh be published by the Akademi with a fine get-up. My suggestion was accepted and a sub-committee was constituted under my presidentship for the purpose... The sub-committee met on May 5, 1961 which recommended that all the works of Puran Singh... be published in one volume. It was also decided that the autobiography of Puran Singh entitled "On Paths of Life" be translated into Punjabi and included in the above-mentioned volume. The sub-committee became the Editorial Board and I was asked to write the Preface to this volume. Later on, Maya Devi, the wife of Puran Singh, wrote her memoirs on the life of Puran Singh, which were included in the volume." The translation of "On Paths of Life" was entrusted to Gurbakhsh Singh, which he completed and published the translated book under the title *Zindgi de Rahan te* in 1970.

Gurbakhsh Singh translated a few stories of foreign writers through the medium of English, in his collections *Asmani Mahan Nadi*, published in 1940 and *Aakhri Sabak*, published in 1949. Writers whose stories were translated included Devison Post, Maurice Hindus, Mary Wilkins, Anna Louis Strong, Alfonse Dode, etc. The book entitled *Dreams* by Olive Emilie Albertina Schreiner (1855-1920), the South African novelist and short story writer, was translated as *Supne* by Gurbakhsh Singh in 1940. Two plays of Moliere were also rendered into Punjabi. This famous French dramatist is said to have established the comedy of manners in France. He wrote social satires. The translation of his dramas entitled *Moliere de Natak* was published in 1958. Gurbakhsh Singh also translated Maxim Gorky's novel *Mother* in 1960, and named it *Maan*.

Gurbakhsh Singh also wrote some books for children, besides editing the children magazine *Bal Sandesh*. The books include collections of stories entitled *Gulabi Ainakan* (1940), *Madhur Bain* (1940), *Parian da Mochi* (1966), *Muradan Purian Karan Wala Khuh* (1966) and *Bam Bahadar* (1966), a novelette entitled *Gulabo* (1966) and two collections of essays entitled *Jugan Purani Gal* (1968) and *Reejhan di Khaddi* (1953).

Chithian Jeetan de Nan published posthumously in 1978, contains letters written by Gurbakhsh Singh to his wife Jeetan on various occasions.

PHILOSOPHY OF LIFE AND LOVE

GURBAKSH SINGH'S philosophy of life is contained in all his writings. He believes that in the three stages of life, childhood, youth and old age, in childhood, the food should be simple, sleep should be under the open sky or in a well-ventilated and airy room. The child should play, laugh and work collectively in the company of other children. He should learn to win and accept defeat. A feeling of responsibility be created in him and he should engage himself in various activities.

In youth no work is to be considered difficult. There should be some objective in life and for that purpose, one should work hard and study. In order to achieve an objective one should put in full strength and if not successful, one should try repeatedly. One should be of service to others and to that end, he should make sacrifices. He should try and develop an attractive personality and have the courage to face the most difficult situations. There should be strength in physique, but justice and tenderness in the heart.

In old age, one should be free of tensions. When the day's work is over, there should be no worries about it. Life should be seen with the vision of a philosopher. Life is neither "taking" nor "giving", the inner spark is to be kindled. Calumny and appreciation, fear and hope should create no anxieties. And this feeling should grow every day that "the world is my soul". The face should be sweet, the eyes pure, there should be a smile on the lips always and no anger should be exhibited on anyone's faults.

Gurbakhsh Singh believes that for a long and happy life, one must cultivate physical culture. He considers exercise necessary for a healthy body. There are exercises for each part of the body. Natural air, pure water, sunshine, and daily bath are indispensable for a healthy body and mind. Cleanliness of various parts of the

body is also a must. Blood is the very stream of our life. Intoxicants and beverages should be avoided in order to prevent impurity of blood. Life can be enjoyed to the full via the body, mind and soul. We should try to live from our head to feet. In this manner we can save ourselves from diseases. For a happy and long life, there are three basic conditions: To be the offspring of healthy parents; an optimistic nature; and knowledge of the functions of the bodily organs and the rules for keeping good health.

To the youth of his country Gurbakhsh Singh advises: "New ideas should be studied. The new idea says there is no fate, the duration of life is not fixed, there is no other heaven or hell except this earth, there is no salvation except death. The chief duty of man is to augment his knowledge. Knowledge increases with achievements. Those achievements are good, which make our earth beautiful. Effort is the implement of destiny, with which kingdoms are created. You can do whatever you like. You can become happy, you can become healthy. There is no compulsion regarding the worship of any one; there is none to throw you in hell. Your conscience is your heaven and hell. How can our world become beautiful? It is through industry, skill and intellect. How can these three things be learnt? By free search. Where there is no freedom, these are absent. There should be no violence on anybody, everyone should be free to carry on his search; the venerable position of worship should not be given to illusions and misapprehensions."

There is oneness of life everywhere. This does not mean that with this knowledge, there will be no need of having a different opinion and no inspiration to act differently. One who has knowledge of this oneness will remove all the afflictions of jealousy, anger and ego from his heart. If these afflictions are removed, the human life will become heavenly. Death is not something frightful. The greatest trouble with man is his failure to become friendly. That success may not be considered a success, which can only be achieved by making another person unsuccessful. This universe is one. It rises up collectively and goes down collectively. If the comfort of one person makes another person uncomfortable, then he is ill.

What are the qualifications of an ideal person? Physically he should be free from all ailments, with sufficient physical strength and power of toleration. He should have a graceful personality with the feeling of happiness and strength to compete. Mentally he should be free from the evils of falsehood, fraud, calumination,

weak-heartedness and untrustworthiness. He should have complete self-control. He should be absorbed in his work with interest and determination. He should have insight, power of mental toleration and ability to take impartial decisions.

The secret of health, comfort and beauty lies in a balanced life. The mind and body should be equally healthy. The hands should work, the feet should search for new places and the mind should touch new heights. The balanced activity of all the three can give that stability to the mind, for which there is a born attraction in every human soul, but which has been considered rare because of man's search at wrong places. It is not so rare, but it is not there in caves, temples, palaces and women's apartments. A balanced life is an amalgam of five elements: economic, social, mental, moral and spiritual. At the economic level, there should be no worry about bread. Socially, one should have power and honour. Morally, one should be honest, sympathetic and full of love. Mentally, one should be gifted with intellect, cleverness and knowledge. Spiritually, there should be oneness with the universe.

That life is successful, which is comfortable and reformed. Emphasis should be laid since childhood on such a life. This much knowledge is sufficient with regard to a king that we are the part and parcel of the administration of a just and omnipotent ruler. He does not need our dependence. He has the power to get any work done by us in order to run his administration. Our daily anxiety should be this: how to reform our life, so that it becomes most comfortable. The question arises: which life can be called a reformed life? All the faculties of the body should be under our control. Annoyances must be borne with composure. Hunger and thirst should not afflict us. Our habits must not bother others. This is, however, the physical side of it. But most of the miseries are created by our mental misarrangement. Our speech is not graceful, we do not show the desired restraint in speech, we cannot stop from complaining, we spoil the good reputation of others by our careless speech, we separate the united ones, we break several friendships and disturb the sleep of many. We get displeased fast and expect more than what is due from others, we consider others at fault for our mistakes. To bring about reform in the mental level efforts have to be made for years. We have to build a standard for justice and truth and have to remain firm on this standard. With bodily and mental reform, peace is felt within us. Only those souls are tender, whose body and mind have been reformed.

Personality can be built by uniting each brick with self-effort. It is the result of personal efforts and is not inherited from parents. It is not made by external favours. It is not the essential result of birth, wealth or born intellect. It is based on good principles and accrues from good actions. He who wants to achieve a perfection of personality, falsehood, fraud, luxurious life-style and faithlessness are ruled out. Calumny and enmity create cracks in the personality. Religion, patriotism and spiritual love have been considered the sources of self-intoxication, but those whom the dream of self-perfection has intoxicated, their intoxication is unique. The rare beauty of their personality fixes their eyes on their target, they cannot budge an inch from their path. They have not to struggle for the exercise of truth, honesty and faithfulness. They have not to fight with their conscience. Their every action leads them to virtuous living like water flowing down a slope. They do not have to check evil feelings, as such feelings do not arise within them. They are not considered good because they want to look graceful before the Lord – They are good and beautiful like flowers. They cannot feel satisfied without attaining the state of self-perfection. They desire the welfare of the whole humanity. Personality is the foundation of a refined and graceful man. The whole world awaits for the coming of such a man. Such a man is love-incarnate. He is a spring of spontaneous natural love.

Gurbakhsh Singh was a staunch believer in the concept of natural love, which he termed *Sahaj Preet*. While in Youngstown he had met a lady, who was the inspiration behind his story "Piar kabza nahin, pehchan hai" (Love is not possession, but recognition). Referring to this type of love he writes "It is true that Sassi-Punnu, Sohni-Mahiwal and Shirin-Farhad were lovers who at one time had one beloved only but every one cannot be such a lover. One longs for some type of love throughout one's life. When a loving person leaves this world, his companion, in separation, cannot die, and the rest of his life, he has glimpses of his love in various signs. But on these signs, the possession is of someone else. He has no desire of possession, but still he is in search of some innocent way of loving the signs. Sometimes the stirred up god of love makes him mad in love for a possessed soul. He does not like anyone else. Therefore, renouncing the desire for possession for ever, and having been absorbed in *sahaj preet* (natural love), he sacrifices himself for his beloved's husband like the character Sydney Carton in Dickens' *A*

Tale of Two Cities. The spirit of this natural love pervades in the works of Gurbakhsh Singh.

In his Introduction to *Rajkumari Latika te Hor Preet Drame* Gurbakhsh Singh mentions that the reader will understand the concept of *sahaj preet* if he goes through Anand Kumar's essay on it. Some portions of the essay are reproduced here. "There is nothing with which we can better compare the mystic union of the finite with its infinite ambient than the self-oblivion of earthly lovers locked in each other's arms, where each is both.....Lovers must refuse each other nothing, yet never fall.... It is not by non-participation but by non-attachment that we live the spiritual life.... The mere understanding of what is meant by *sahaj* demands at least a racial if not an individual education in love, an education related to athletics and dancing, music and hygiene. The sexual relation in itself must not be so rare or so exciting as to intoxicate: one should enjoy a woman as one enjoys any other living thing, any forest, flower or mountain, that reveals itself to those who are patient. One should not be forced to the act of love by merely physical tension.... What the lover seeks should be the full response, and not his mere pleasure: and by this I do not mean anything so sentimental as 'forbearance' or 'self-sacrifice', but what will please him most. Under these conditions violence has no attraction. In Arabia, Burton tells us, the Musalmans respected even their slaves, and it was 'pundonor', a point of culture, that a slave like any other woman, must be wooed. (There has been no actual slavery in India or very little.)

"Lafcadio Hearn has pointed out the enormous degree to which Modern European literature is permeated with the idea of love. There is, however, as nothing compared with what we find in the Vaishnava literature of Hindustan. There, however, is always interpretation: in European romantic literature there is rarely anything better than description. That should only be a passing phase, for the tendency of Western sexual freedom is certainly idealistic, and its forms are destined to be developed until the spiritual significance is made clear. Under the sway of modern hedonism, where nothing is accepted as an end, and everything is a means to something else, the pre-conditions for understanding *sahaj* scarcely exist. *Sahaj* has nothing to do with the cult of pleasure. It is a doctrine of the *tapa*, and a path of non-pursuit. All that is best for us comes of itself into our hands but – if we survive to overtake it, it perpetually eludes us."

In his Foreword to *Rajkumari Latika te Hor Preet Drame*, Gurbakhsh Singh has vividly explained this concept, giving appropriate examples from his works. According to him, in Western knowledge, two types of love are famous. One is sexual and the other platonic. In the first type love, physical excitement and desire often create boils on the soul. In the second, since there is no warmth in the blood, the soul is benumbed. In this love, the body loses its lustre, since it has no significance. Gurbakhsh Singh says, "A love, separate from the above two, came into my experience. In my own country, I had been concealing this love from everyone except my friends, because on this subject the prevalent ideas are not liberal. When I went to the European countries, I mustered courage to tell others about my thoughts. For this purpose I wrote my true story entitled "A Starved Soul" (*Bhukki Atma*) and presented it in America. The structure and emotions of the story were liked but the conclusion was not considered satisfactory. One of my educated friends advised me to change the conclusion according to the prevalent thoughts in order to make it successful. But this was not acceptable to me because I did not want to write a tasteful story. I wanted to present an experience of mine and exhibit a state of life. My presentation was not accepted by anyone. I had forgotten that story when one day I received an anonymous letter in which the writer had told that it was actually her story and she was a starved soul. After a few days, I received another letter, in which the same writer had asked to fix some time for our meeting. The writer of the letter was the wife of a very rich man. Her sweet soul differed in ideas from her very busy husband. We met. The conclusion which I had drawn in my story and which was considered unnatural, the same came to light after our meetings within two months. In spite of the absence of sex-relation, there was not much romance in this love that the millionaire woman often put her social position in danger and at the end of her letters, in spite of giving her name, she wrote "Mad in Ecstasy". Did her love not belong to the *sahaj* class? Its proof can be seen in the beginning of one of her letters addressed to me: "My Sun or son, whatever you please." At the same time she could call her beloved *Sun* and *son*. As I understand, she had used these words only to reveal the purity of her love. The effect of this love, I think, is like this: A cloud comes over a soul whose love has been dried up. The dry heart looks upwards. Tears roll down from some eye full of love and the leaves of the dry heart become green. Earlier the surrounding were seen with jealousy, now there is a

prayer for the happiness of the surroundings. Those who did not look nice, now there is a desire to see them nice. The old bickerings in the love-hungry house of the above-mentioned sweet lady, could not continue in her satiated heart. The orchard of the hearts of husband and wife became full of foliage, the springs of verdure welled up within them, then there was no hunger for a cloud-messenger or a love-cloud.

"In the first kind of love, there is a desire for the entire possession of the beloved. In the second kind of love, one can get the pleasure of knowing only one part of the life of the beloved. In the third kind of love (*sahaj preet*) the beloved appears like a sun of love. It kindles the dimmed glass of eyes by awakening the emotions in the mind, it exhibits a queer unity and the world appears beautiful. Those whom we have not recognised, their beauty shines before us. We ask for the sun, not for keeping it within the room or cling to its neck, but to see the world, to escape from darkness and to search the reality. This is the function of the beloved in *sahaj*.

"The above-mentioned story of the starved soul was narrated to my educated friend. He was greatly surprised and having been interested in my search repeatedly laid emphasis on the point that I should write a book on this third type of love. But on returning to my country, I joined government service. The pen fell down from my hand and for nine years I had no urge to pick it up. Now the *Preet Lari* has created an understanding with my displeased pen and in pursuance of the wishes of my American friend, I am working anxiously for the collection of ideas about this love. In order to gain knowledge, I read some books. After reading I am surprised that the love which I had been considering the result of my search, it has been prevalent in my country for hundreds of years. In Sanskrit literature, this love is called *sahaj*. A good deal of literature has been written on it and in the recent age its famous example is the love of Chandi Das with Rami, a washerwoman.

"Meri Achhut Saheli" (My untouchable girl-friend), "Oma te usda Anokha Mali" (Oma and her strange gardener), "Bhukki Atma" (A Starved Soul) and "Rajkumari Latika" are the work of that time, when the writer had neither listened nor read anything about it. That love is called *sahaj preet* by me, in which the body, mind and soul are equally involved. This love is created only in sweet and developed souls. The love-hunger of the lovers absorbed in this love becomes so tender and pure that they have no attraction for base and crude enjoyments....The objective of this love is not the

attainment of some taste, it is to create a spark by knocking the two souls against the mountain of love. This spark ultimately becomes a light, which enlightens the dark parts of life. Addressing Rami, Chandi Das has described this state in his own words in this manner: 'I have taken refuge at your feet. O my beloved, when I do not see you, my mind has no peace... You are to me like the mother of an unprotected child.... You are my goddess, you are my necklace, you are my universe...Without you there is darkness everywhere. You are the object of my prayers... I cannot forget your tenderness and beauty – but still I have no desire in my heart.' In the above-mentioned state, the matter for attentive consideration is that Chandi Das, who considers Rami as his necklace, his universe and the source of his peace and who can never forget the tenderness and beauty of Rami, can say this: 'there is no desire in my heart'. In these words, there is a key to the strange love of Rajkumari Latika. Latika is mad in love for her beloved, she considers him as the centre of her dreams, but still she has no desire regarding (her beloved) Mandhir. Her father allows her to marry Mandhir, but she refuses. The marriage could have made her life comfortable and full of enjoyment, but these were not her objectives. Her love is a recognition, an end within itself and is the final halting place of her destination, therefore there is no need of any formal meeting for its perfection; it does not want possession, it does not ask for pleasure, it has no desire for children – it is a recognition, it is accomplished any time. It does not follow any rule and has no bondage. When water mixes with water, it does not separate, when air mixes with air, it does not separate. The rain comes down, the wind blows, in the same way, *sahaj* is a natural inspiration; it does not arise forcibly, it does not stop forcibly. Such is the concept of natural love of Gurbakhsh Singh in his own words.

IMPACT ON PUNJABI WRITERS

BEFORE GURBAKHSH Singh appeared on the literary scene, Bhai Vir Singh had already established his position as a writer of Sikh history and religion. The Singh Sabha Movement had awakened a profound religious consciousness among the Sikhs. The Arya Samaj Movement had brought religious awakening among the Hindus. Similarly the Muslims of Punjab had not lagged behind regarding their religious sentiments. The Christian Missions had stepped up their preachings. Such was the prevailing atmosphere in which Gurbakhsh Singh had been born and bred. There was a flood of religious writings. The 'divide and rule' policy of the British Government had created enough bitterness among the various communities in the Punjab. Since the Sikh religious literature existed in Gurmukhi script, the Hindus only owned Devanagari script and Hindi language and the Muslims could think of nothing else except the Persian script and the Urdu language. The Punjabi language was thus considered the language of the Sikhs, though the mother-tongue of all Punjabis was Punjabi.

After the Singh Sabha Movement came the Akali Movement, which had a political stance, though it had been the Gurudwara Reform Movement. But in 1919, Gurbakhsh Singh had left for studies in America, from where he returned by the end of 1923 and after visiting various countries in Europe, he came to India in 1924. For about nine years he remained in government service. It was in 1933, that he started his magazine *Preet Lari*. He had brought many new ideas with him. His outlook on life had undergone considerable change. He had adopted his new concepts of life and love, therefore he appeared as a new man to Punjabi masses. Since his magazine was in Punjabi and Gurmukhi script, the circle of his readers were

mostly the followers of Sikh religion. When he wrote about Guru Gobind Singh, his radical new ideas were opposed by the Sikh traditionalists. His views regarding ritualism, symbolism and formalism in religion were considered despicable by the religious fundamentalists. However, his approach was intellectual and the Sikh intellectuals came to his rescue.

It was for the first time that Gurbakhsh Singh brought a new stance in Punjabi writing, by expressing new ideas about life, literature, art, religion, morality, love, sex, etc. Most of his ideas revolve round his concept of natural love. His idealism attracted several people, who wanted to reside near him and be benefitted by his personal experience. For this the plan for a new township was chalked out and ultimately Preet Nagar (the town of love) came into being. Several writers considered him as the source of their inspiration and gathered around him in Preet Nagar. They included among author Nanak Singh, Amrita Pritam, Upendra Nath 'Ashk', Sahir Ludhianavi, Balwant Gargi, Devinder Satyarthi, Naurang Singh, Piara Singh Sehrai, and Darshan Singh Awara. Besides these litterateurs, artist Sobha Singh, film-actors Balraj Sahni and Achla Sachdev and singer Surinder Kaur considered Preet Nagar as their new haven. Pritam Singh (called "Bhapa" affectionately), the noted Punjabi printer, S. Jagdish Singh, an eminent psychologist and Piara Singh "Data", writer and humorist also settled at Preet Nagar. Dr. M. S. Randhawa, the famous botanist and a distinguished officer in the government was a personal friend of Gurbakhsh Singh, who loved to visit the new township. Thus Preet Nagar became a literary and cultural centre of the Punjab. The literary revolution brought in by Gurbakhsh Singh had its impact on Jaswant Singh Kanwal, Kartar Singh Duggal, Diwan Singh Kalepani, and Professor Mohan Singh. Most of the writers, who came to live at Preet Nagar, loved the place because it gave them personal freedom. The common dialogue among the intellectuals resulted in some common features in their writings. The subjects mostly attempted were love, religion, morality, personality, happiness, literature, art, freedom, health, life, death, etc. Even writers not living in Preet Nagar began to write on such subjects. Navtej Singh, the son of Gurbakhsh Singh, who was also associated with *Preet Lari* and later on became its editor, came under the direct impact of his father. Jagjit Singh Anand, the noted Punjabi journalist and son-in-law of Gurbakhsh Singh and Dr. Jaswant Gill exhibit to some extent the impress of Gurbakhsh Singh on their writings. Since Gurbakhsh Singh has proved to be a master

journalist, several journalists of other papers drew inspiration from his writings.

Gurbakhsh Singh's dreams were shattered midway because of certain internal and external conditions, the main being the partition of the country. He and his comrades had to leave Preet Nagar abruptly because of partition. Nanak Singh writing about Gurbakhsh Singh says, "Bravo to this self-denying man who bearing so many attacks of failures, has not felt disappointed and has not swerved from his path of love.this bird of love has not lost his enthusiasm and his message of love has reached very far." Dr. M. S. Randhawa likewise says, "Most of the dreams of Gurbakhsh Singh have not been fulfilled. But his incomplete dreams have given new inspirations to thousands of people. He showed the wide sphere of science to the Punjabis, taking them out of the narrow limits. There will always be the seal of Gurbakhsh Singh on Punjabi language, literature and culture."

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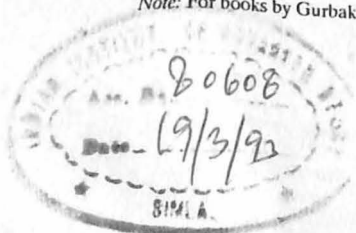
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