

## Gyani Gurdit Singh

Gyani Gurdit Singh of *Mera Pind* (My Village) fame is no more with us. His death, even at the age of 84, gives his reader a shock, as he has given us a modern classic. Originally published in 1960, though this book depicts the rural Punjab of pre green revolution days, it seems to be a fresh writing because of its refreshing style; that compelled Gurbachan Singh Talib to write, “Feelings, passions, customs and attitudes which have characterized our ancestors for numerous generations, described here with delight and gusto in imaginative writing make a deeply nostalgic appeal to the heart...” The first part of *Mera Pind* was published as *Mere Pind Da Jiwan* (Life of my Village) in 1958 and got an award from Unesco.

Born in the state of Malerkotla in 1923 Gyani Gurdit Singh had his early education in the village Gurdwara in traditional mode. In addition to the study of Guru Granth Sahib and know-how of rural professions, he learnt the nuances of poetics of literature and philosophy. After passing his Gyani examination in 1944-45 he traveled extensively from Panja Sahib to Patna, from the treasure houses of religious places to the libraries of Lahore, Patiala and Amritsar and spent time in the Naagri Pracharni Sabha Library at Benaras.

Though illustrious writers like M S Randhawa, Devinder Satyarthi and Suba Singh did their best to project our rural ethos; yet Gyani Gurdit Singh’s place remains unique. *Mera Pind* is comprehensive to the extent of an encyclopedia and interesting to the degree of a novel. M S Randhawa rightly points out that, “It’s not only a sketch of the physical village but also represents the mind, moods and emotions of its inhabitants.” Amrita Pritam terms it as a “nest in which playing birds of Punjabi psyche can be seen..”

After an introduction of the physical features of village ‘Mithewal’, the reader is also informed about his ancestors; before giving details of his childhood and neighborhood. He writes about the spiritual guides, saints and seers. His essays tell us how the villagers

spent their day; the sweltering noon of summers and freezing evenings of winters. Long essays on their superstitions are enough to explore the mind of our people: beliefs about ghosts, different days, animals, natural calamities and dreams. Similarly a detailed sketch of the important dates and festivals like Rakhri, Gugga Naumi, Saraadh, Arti of Saanjhi Mai, Diwali, Tikka Bhai Dooj, Lohri, Maghi, Basant Panchmi, Holi, Vaisakhi, Teej, and Tiranjan reveal their character convincingly. Part two of the volume gives a detailed account of the rites and rituals performed at different occasions and functions that includes birth, marriage and death.

The real strength of this book lies in its language and universality that makes '*Mithewal*' every Punjabi's native place. According to Khushwant Singh, "The one thing that will give '*Mera Pind*' a long lease of life, if not immortality, is the fact that the author has used the Punjabi language as it is spoken by the common people. The Punjabi of *Mera Pind* is full-blooded, rugged and masculine." The reading of *Mera Pind* influenced the noted film actor Balraj Sahni so much that he exclaimed, "This is an epoch-changing book. It has quenched my thirst, and now I love my land more than ever."