

and they left the Ārya Samāj for good. They joined hands with Gurmukh Singh and threw themselves whole-heartedly into the Singh Sabhā work.

Giānī Ditt Singh sported a powerful pen and was equally at home in prose as well as in verse. He wrote more than forty books and pamphlets on Sikh theology and history and on current politics. Well-known among his works are: Gurū Nānak Prabodh (ਗੁਰੂ ਨਾਨਕ ਪ੍ਰਬੋਧ), Gurū Arjan Carittar (ਗੁਰੂ ਅਰਜਨ ਚਰੀਤਰ), Dambh Bidāran (ਦੰਭ ਬਿਦਾਰਨ), Durga Prabodh (ਦੁਰਗਾ ਪ੍ਰਬੋਧ), Panth Prabodh (ਪੰਥ ਪ੍ਰਬੋਧ), Rāj Prābodh (ਰਾਜ ਪ੍ਰਬੋਧ), Merā ate Sādhū Dayānand dā Sambād (ਮੇਰਾ ਅਤੇ ਸਾਧੂ ਦਯਾਨੰਦ ਦਾ ਸੰਬਾਦ), Naklī Sikh Prabodh (ਨਕਲੀ ਸਿਖ ਪ੍ਰਬੋਧ) and Panth Sudhār Binai Pattar (ਪੰਥ ਸੁਦਾਰ ਬਿਨੈ ਪੱਤਰ). He also published accounts of the martyrdom of Bhāī Tārū Singh (ਭਾਈ ਤਾਰੂ ਸਿੰਘ), Bhāī Subeg Singh (ਭਾਈ ਸੁਬੇਗ ਸਿੰਘ), Bhāī Mahtāb Singh (ਭਾਈ ਮਹਤਾਬ ਸਿੰਘ), Bhāī Garjā Singh (ਭਾਈ ਗਰਜਾ ਸਿੰਘ) and Bhāī Botā Singh (ਭਾਈ ਬੋਤਾ ਸਿੰਘ). Ditt Singh's marriage took place in Lāhaur in 1880 according to the Sikh tradition. His wife, Bishan Kaur (ਬਿਸ਼ਨ ਕੌਰ), shared his religious zeal and the couple had a happy married life. They had two children, a son, Baldev Singh (ਬਲਦੇਵ ਸਿੰਘ), born in 1886, and a daughter, Vidyāvant Kaur (ਵਿਦਯਾਵੰਤ ਕੌਰ), born in 1890. Giānī Ditt Singh was very fond of his wife. Her death, on 17 June, 1901, was a great sadness to him. He had already been under a strain owing to persistently heavy work since the death, in 1898, of Gurmukh Singh. He still continued to work with patience and fortitude, but his health deteriorated rapidly and he fell seriously ill. He was treated but even with best efforts it was of no avail. Giānī Ditt Singh died in Lāhaur on 6 September 1901. The loss was mourned widely by the Sikhs. A 15-member memorial committee was formed with Bhāī Arjan Singh Bāgaṛīān (ਭਾਈ ਅਰਜਨ ਸਿੰਘ ਬਾਗੜੀਆਂ) as chairman. Notable memorials honoring his name were Giānī Ditt Singh Khālsā Boarding House in Lāhaur and Bhāī Ditt Singh Library opened at the Sikh Kanyā Mahāvidyālā (ਸਿਖ ਕਨਯਾ ਮਹਾਵਿਦਯਾਲਾ) Firozpur by Bhāī Takht Singh (ਭਾਈ ਤਖਤ ਸਿੰਘ), one of his former students and a close friend.

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### **Siṅgh Sabhā (ਸਿੰਘ ਸਭਾ) Movement and significant achievements**

The Siṅgh Sabhā Movement was a part of the great Sikh (ਸਿੱਖ) revitalization of the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. The leaders of this movement believed that the values of the East and the West should blend together instead of being in conflict with each other. The leaders of the Siṅgh Sabhā Movement wanted to use the advantages and many innovations of the British. They urged all Sikhs to assimilate the merits of Western thought and scholarship. They rightly felt that the prejudice against Western ideas had stood in the way of the progress of the community in the past.

The leaders were especially keen in spreading modern education among Sikhs. “They spread a network of educational institutions which aimed at providing such opportunities to the Sikhs as would help them in acquiring modern education combined with the advantage of instruction in the Sikh religion, Sikh history, Sikh literature and Gurmukhī (ਗੁਰਮੁਖੀ) script.”

Some of the significant achievements of the Siṅgh Sabhā Movement are the establishment of the Khālṣā (ਖਾਲਸਾ) College at Ammritsar (ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤਸਰ) in 1892. There were the annual Sikh Education Conferences which helped a great deal in spreading education among the Sikhs. Within a few decades the percentages of literacy of the Sikhs considerably increased and the number of schools and colleges multiplied at an astonishing speed.

The leaders of the Siṅgh Sabhā also worked tirelessly for the removal of caste prejudices, the emancipation of women, the eradication of non-Sikh practices like polygamy, (having more than one wife) child marriage, and female infanticide (killing of baby girls). They also promoted the simplification of Sikh ceremonies from birth to death. The passing of the Anand (ਅਨੰਦ) Marriage Act in 1909 which legalized the Sikh form of marriage was a significant achievement of the Siṅgh Sabhā.

As for the political outlook, the Siṅgh Sabhā leaders were moderates, believing in constitutional methods. They prevented violence and took care to avoid clashing with the Government. They also adopted a method of reasoned representation in order to impress upon the government the urgency of their demands. They would often send memoranda to the Government on issues affecting the Sikhs; for example, development of Pañjābī (ਪੰਜਾਬੀ), and representation of the Sikhs in civil services.

The popularity of the Siṅgh Sabhā Movement gave rise to a new English-educated middle class among the Sikhs. This new class had a strong political ambition and many were militant in approach. The common zeal for reform under the Siṅgh Sabhā movement began to dwindle down since this new generation of Sikhs felt that their political aspirations were not met. This new class of Sikhs came to be known as the Akālīs (ਅਕਾਲੀ) and they openly clashed with the government. The Akālīs first fought for the liberation of their shrines and then for the liberation of their land.

*Adapted from: Sikh Review January 2006 issue*

### **Bhāi Vīr Siṅgh (ਭਾਈ ਵੀਰ ਸਿੰਘ)**

Bhāi Vīr Siṅgh was a poet, scholar, philosopher, writer, social and religious revitalizer and, above all, an institution builder. He was born on 5 December 1872, in Ammritsar. Bhāi Vīr Siṅgh was the eldest of Dr. Caran Siṅgh's (ਡਾ. ਚਰਨ ਸਿੰਘ) three sons. Bhāi Vīr Siṅgh was born into a family of scholars and grew up in the holy city of Ammritsar.

Bhāi Vīr Siṅgh had the benefit of both, the traditional native learning as well as modern English education. He learnt Persian and Urdu and was apprenticed to Giani Harbhajan Siṅgh, a leading

classical scholar in Sanskrit and Sikh literature. He then joined the Church Mission School, Amritsar and completed his examination there in 1891. At school, the conversion of some of the students created an experience which strengthened his own religious conviction. From the Christian missionaries' emphasis on literary resources, he learnt how efficacious the written word could be as a means of informing and influencing a person's innermost being. Through his English courses, he acquired familiarity with modern literary forms, especially the short lyric. While still at school, Bhāi Vīr Singh was married, at the age of 17, to Catar Kaur, daughter of Sardar Narain Singh of Amritsar.

Unlike the educated young men of his time, Bhāi Vīr Singh was not tempted by prospects of a career in government services. He chose for himself the calling of a writer and created material conditions for a single minded pursuit of it. He set up a lithograph press in collaboration with Bhāi Wazir Singh, a friend of his father's, very soon after he completed his examination. As his first essays in the literary field, Bhāi Vīr Singh composed some Geography textbooks for schools.

Considered to be the forerunner of modern Pañjābī literature, Bhāi Vīr Singh wrote prose, novels, poems, plays, and historical research. Bhāi Vīr Singh began taking active interest in the affairs of the Singh Sabhā Movement. To promote its aims and objects, he launched in 1894, the Khalsa Tract Society. He also promoted the Sikh Educational Society (1908) and the Punjab and Sind Bank (1908). "Interest in corporate activity directed towards community development remained Bhāi Vīr Singh's constant concern, simultaneously with his creative and scholarly pursuits." He started publishing *Khālsā Samācār* (ਖਾਲਸਾ ਸਮਾਚਾਰ), the first Pañjābī daily newspaper. With the *Khālsā Samācār*, he tried to bring about social and religious reform towards the importance of education, equal rights to women, and abolition of the caste system and so on. He also helped to establish the *Khālsā College* in Amritsar. He was a great scholar, not only of Sikhī (ਸਿਖੀ) but also Hindūism, Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam.

Bhāi Vīr Singh also edited and published the *Prācīn Panth Prakāsh* (ਪ੍ਰਾਚੀਨ ਪੰਥ ਪ੍ਰਕਾਸ਼) and *Janamsākhī* (ਜਨਮਸਾਖੀ), the life story of Gurū Nānak Sāhib. He organized the Chief *Khālsā Divān* (ਖਾਲਸਾ ਦਿਵਾਨ), a representative body of Sikhs that was established to bring religious and social revitalization. He also formed the Sikh educational committee for spreading education.

Finally, Bhāi Vīr Singh is most famous for his literary works. They include Pañjābī novels *Sundarī* (ਸੁੰਦਰੀ) (1898), *Bijai Singh* (ਬਿਜੈ ਸਿੰਘ) (1899), *Satvant Kaur* (ਸਤਵੰਤ ਕੌਰ) (published in two parts, part 1 in 1900 and part 2 in 1927). These were aimed at recreating the heroic period (eighteenth century) of Sikh history. *Subhāgī dā Sudhār Hathīm Bābā Naudh Singh* (ਸੁਭਾਗੀ ਦਾ ਸੁਧਾਰ ਹਥੀਂ ਬਾਬਾ ਨੌਧ ਸਿੰਘ), popularly known as *Bābā Naudh Singh* was published in book form in 1921. In 1905 Bhāi Vīr Singh started writing *Rāṇā Sūrat Singh* (ਰਾਣਾ ਸੂਰਤ ਸਿੰਘ), the first Pañjābī epic. (An epic is: noting or pertaining to a long poetic composition, usually centered upon a hero, in which a series of great achievements or events are narrated in elevated style: Homer's *Iliad* is an epic poem. [www.dictionary.com](http://www.dictionary.com)) Soon after the publication of *Rāṇā Sūrat Singh* in book form, in 1919, he turned to shorter poems and lyrics. One came after the other: *Dil Taraṅg* (ਦਿਲ ਤਰੰਗ) (1920), *Eral Tupke* (ਏਰਲ ਤੁਪਕੇ) (1921), *Lahirām de Har* (ਲਹਿਰਾਂ ਦੇ ਹਰ) (1921), *Maṭak Hulāre* (ਮਟਕ ਹੁਲਾਰੇ) (1922), and *Bijlām de Har* (ਬਿਜਲੀਆਂ ਦੇ ਹਰ) (1927). After some time came *Mere Saīām Jō* (ਮੇਰੇ ਸਾਈਆਂ ਜੀਓ) (1953). He revised and enlarged *Giānī Hazārā Singh's* (ਗਿਆਨੀ ਹਜ਼ਾਰਾ ਸਿੰਘ) dictionary, *Srī Gurū Granth Kosh* (ਸ੍ਰੀ ਗੁਰੂ ਗ੍ਰੰਥ ਕੋਸ਼), originally published in 1898. Monumental in size was his annotation of Bhāi Santokh Singh's (ਭਾਈ ਸੰਤੋਖ ਸਿੰਘ) great work, *Srī Gur Pratāp Sūraj Granth* (ਸ੍ਰੀ ਗੁਰ ਪ੍ਰਤਾਪ ਸੂਰਜ ਗ੍ਰੰਥ), published from 1927 to 1935 in fourteen volumes covering 6668 pages.

As soon as he completed the Srī Gur Pratāp Sūraj Granth, he started another huge project. This was a detailed commentary on the Gurū Granth Sāhib. After a lifetime of hard work, and due to old age, in early 1957 signs of fatigue and weakness appeared. He died shortly after, in June 1957.

Adapted from: Encyclopedia of Sikhism, [www.sikh-history.com](http://www.sikh-history.com), and [www.sikhreview.org](http://www.sikhreview.org)

***Additional recommended texts for teachers on Bhāi Vīr Siṅgh:***

- *Gurbacan Siṅgh Tālib, and Atar Siṅgh. Bhāi Vīr Siṅgh: Life, Times and Works. ed., Caṇḍīgaṛ, 1973.*
- *Harbans Siṅgh. Bhāi Vīr Siṅgh, Dillī, 1972*
- *Harbans Siṅgh and Gurbacan Siṅgh Tālib. Bhāi Vīr Siṅgh: Poet of the Sikhs.*

**Some of Bhāi Vīr Siṅgh's poetry:**

His famous poem 'Violet Flower' (Banāfshā - ਬਨਾਫਸ਼ਾ, translated by Dr. Gopāl Siṅgh), shows the real nature of this saintly poet:

Let my blossoms live in solitude,  
Sheltered by mountain's ledge,  
Let no evil eye feast its lust on me;  
I lie on world's edge.  
I seek to live in solitude.  
And wither and cease;  
But the eyes of the scent crusher seek me,  
And break my peace.

Some translated lines of Bhāi Sāhib,

'In a dream You came to me  
I leapt to hold You in my embrace;  
It was but a fantasy (nūr) I could not hold -  
And my arms ached with longing.  
Then I rushed to clasp Your feet  
To lay my head thereon;  
Even these I could not reach  
For You were high and I was low.'

Khushwant Siṅgh, paying a tribute, concludes "Even while he lived, people knew him only through his writings which will live forever. Wherever the Pañjābī language is spoken, there Vīr Siṅgh's name will be spoken too. And whenever the Sikhs begin to doubt their faith, there will be Vīr Siṅgh's spirit to inspire them and beckon them to the fold."

Source: [www.sikhreview.org/december2000](http://www.sikhreview.org/december2000)

**ਭਾਈ ਵੀਰ ਸਿੰਘ**

ਭਾਈ ਵੀਰ ਸਿੰਘ ਜੀ ਪੰਜਾਬੀ ਦੇ ਬਹੁਤ ਵਡੇ ਕਵੀ ਤੇ ਨਾਵਲਕਾਰ ਸਨ। ਆਪ ਪੂਰਨ ਗੁਰਸਿਖ ਸਨ। ਆਪ ਜੀ ਦਾ ਜਨਮ ੫ ਦਸੰਬਰ ੧੮੭੨ ਈ : ਨੂੰ ਮਾਤਾ ਉੱਤਮ ਕੌਰ ਦੀ ਕੁਖੋਂ ਡਾ. ਚਰਨ ਸਿੰਘ ਜੀ ਦੇ ਘਰ ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤਸਰ ਵਿਖੇ ਹੋਇਆ ਸੀ।

ਆਪ ਜੀ ਨੂੰ ਬਚਪਨ ਤੋਂ ਹੀ ਗੁਰਬਾਣੀ ਨਾਲ ਬਹੁਤ ਪਿਆਰ ਸੀ। ਆਪ ਅਠ ਸਾਲ ਦੀ ਉਮਰ ਵਿਚ ਹੀ ਗੁਰੂ ਗ੍ਰੰਥ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਜੀ ਦਾ ਪਾਠ ਕਰਨ ਲਗ ਪਏ ਸਨ। ਆਪ ਜੀ ਦੇ ਜੀਵਨ ਦੇ ਤਿੰਨ ਮੁਖ ਨਿਆਮ ਸਨ - ਸਕੂਲ ਬੜੇ ਚਾਅ ਨਾਲ ਜਾਣਾ, ਸਵੇਰੇ ਨਿਤ ਹਰਿਮੰਦਰ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਜੀ ਦੇ ਦਰਸ਼ਨ ਕਰਨੇ ਅਤੇ ਸ਼ਾਮ ਨੂੰ ਨੇਮ ਨਾਲ ਸੈਰ ਕਰਨ ਜਾਣਾ।

ਆਪ ਜੀ ਨੇ ਆਪਣੀ ਮੁਢਲੀ ਪੜ੍ਹਾਈ ਮਿਸ਼ਨ ਸਕੂਲ ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤਸਰ ਤੋਂ ਪਰਾਪਤ ਕੀਤੀ। ੧੮੯੧ ਈ: ਵਿਚ ਆਪ ਜੀ ਨੇ ਦਸਵੀਂ ਪਾਸ ਕੀਤੀ। ਆਪ ਆਪਣੇ ਸਾਰੇ ਜ਼ਿਲੇ ਵਿਚੋਂ ਪਹਿਲੇ ਦਰਜੇ ਤੇ ਆਏ। ਇਸ ਪਰਾਪਤੀ ਉੱਤੇ ਆਪ ਜੀ ਨੂੰ ਜ਼ਿਲੇ ਦੇ ਕਰਮਚਾਰੀਆਂ ਵਲੋਂ ਸੋਨੇ ਦਾ ਮੈਡਲ ਦਿਤਾ ਗਿਆ। ਆਪ ਆਪਣਾ ਬਹੁਤਾ ਸਮਾਂ ਆਪਣੇ ਨਾਨਾ ਗਿਆਨੀ ਹਜ਼ਾਰਾ ਸਿੰਘ ਜੀ ਕੋਲ ਹੀ ਬਿਤਾਇਆ ਕਰਦੇ ਸਨ। ਗਿਆਨੀ ਜੀ ਬਹੁਤ ਚੰਗੇ ਲਿਖਾਰੀ ਸਨ।

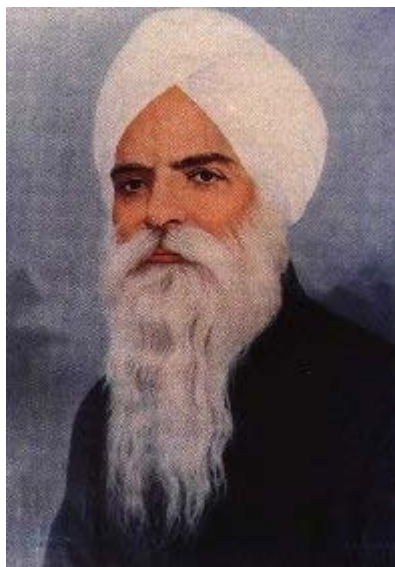
ਆਪ ਬਚਪਨ ਤੋਂ ਹੀ ਅਪਣੇ ਆਪ ਵਿਚ ਮਗਨ ਰਿਹਾ ਕਰਦੇ ਸਨ ਅਤੇ ਸੁੰਤਰਤ ਸੁਭਾਉ ਵਾਲੇ ਸਨ। ਦਸਵੀਂ ਪਾਸ ਕਰਨ ਮਗਰੋਂ ਆਪ ਨੂੰ ਚੰਗੀ ਤੋਂ ਚੰਗੀ ਨੌਕਰੀ ਮਿਲ ਸਕਦੀ ਸੀ, ਪਰ ਆਪ ਨੇ ਨੌਕਰੀ ਕਰਨੀ ਚੰਗੀ ਨਾ ਸਮਝੀ। ਆਪ ਜੀ ਨੇ ਅਪਣੇ ਪਿਤਾ ਦੇ ਮਿਤਰ ਵਜ਼ੀਰ ਸਿੰਘ ਨਾਲ ਰਲ ਕੇ ਵਜ਼ੀਰ ਹਿੰਦ ਪ੍ਰੈਸ ਨਾਂ ਹੇਠਾਂ ਇਕ ਪ੍ਰੈਸ ਹਾਲ ਬਜ਼ਾਰ ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤਸਰ ਵਿਚ ਲਾ ਲਿਆ। ਇਸ ਪ੍ਰੈਸ ਰਾਹੀਂ ਪੰਜਾਬੀ ਅਖ਼ਬਾਰ ਅਤੇ ਪੰਜਾਬੀ ਕਿਤਾਬਾਂ ਛਾਪ ਕੇ ਆਪ ਪੰਜਾਬੀ ਬੋਲੀ ਦੀ ਦਿਨ ਰਾਤ ਸੇਵਾ ਕਰਨ ਲਗ ਪਏ।

ਆਪ ਜੀ ਨੇ ਬਹੁਤ ਹੀ ਛੋਟੀ ਉਮਰ ਵਿਚ ਕਵਿਤਾ ਲਿਖਣੀ ਅਰੰਭ ਕਰ ਦਿਤੀ ਸੀ। ਉਸ ਸਮੇਂ ਪੰਜਾਬੀ ਬੋਲੀ ਵਿਚ ਬਹੁਤ ਘਟ ਕਵੀ ਕਵਿਤਾ ਲਿਖਦੇ ਸਨ। ਆਪ ਦਲੇਰੀ ਨਾਲ ਪੰਜਾਬੀ ਵਿਚ ਚੰਗੀ ਕਵਿਤਾ ਲਿਖਣ ਲਗ ਪਏ। ਆਪ ਜੀ ਨੇ ਚੰਗੀ ਕਵਿਤਾ ਹੀ ਨਹੀਂ ਲਿਖੀਆਂ ਸਗੋਂ ਪੰਜਾਬੀ ਵਿਚ ਹੋਰ ਵੀ ਚੰਗੀਆਂ ਕਿਤਾਬਾਂ ਲਿਖੀਆਂ ਹਨ।

ਆਪ ਜੀ ਦੀਆਂ ਪਰਸਿਧ ਕਿਤਾਬਾਂ ਇਹ ਹਨ: ਰਾਜਾ ਸੂਰਤ ਸਿੰਘ, ਸੁੰਦਰੀ, ਬਿਜੈ ਸਿੰਘ, ਸਤਵੰਤ ਕੌਰ ਅਤੇ ਮਟਕ ਹੁਲਾਰੇ।

ਆਪ ਜੀ ਦਾ ਸੁਭਾਉ ਬੜਾ ਮਿਠਾ ਤੇ ਚੰਗਾ ਸੀ। ਆਪ ਦਿਖਾਵੇ ਦੇ ਖਿਲਾਫ ਸਨ। ਆਪ ਜੀ ਨੂੰ ਇਕਾਂਤ ਬਹੁਤ ਪਸੰਦ ਸੀ। ਆਪ ਜੀ ਨੂੰ ਕੁਦਰਤੀ ਨਜ਼ਾਰਿਆਂ ਨਾਲ ਬਹੁਤ ਪਿਆਰ ਸੀ। ਇਸ ਲਈ ਆਪ ਜੀ ਨੇ ਫੁਲਾਂ, ਝੀਲਾਂ, ਚਸ਼ਮਿਆਂ, ਪਹਾੜਾਂ ਅਤੇ ਦਰਿਆਵਾਂ ਸਬੰਧੀ ਬਹੁਤ ਸੁੰਦਰ ਕਵਿਤਾਵਾਂ ਲਿਖੀਆਂ ਹਨ।

ਆਪ ਜੂਨ ੧੯੫੭ ਈ: ਵਿਚ ਸਰੀਰ ਤਿਆਗ ਗਏ। ਭਾਈ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਭਾਵੇਂ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਛੱਡ ਗਏ ਹਨ, ਪਰ ਆਪਣੀਆਂ ਰਚਨਾਵਾਂ ਕਰਕੇ ਸਦਾ ਜੀਉਂਦੇ ਰਹਿਣਗੇ।



Picture from: <http://www.sikh-heritage.co.uk/writers/Vir%20singh/vir.jpg>