

# BHAI SAHIB Dr VIR SINGH

## Father of Modern Punjabi Literature\*

Prof Devinder Singh Chahal, PhD  
Institute for Understanding Sikhism  
3979 Acadia, Laval, Quebec, Canada H7T 1G3

### ABSTRACT

*Bhai Vir Singh is such a charismatic personality in the renaissance of Punjabi literature and Sikhism that some famous Sikh scholars like Harbans Singh, Gurbachan Singh Talib, J. S. Guleria, Parkash Singh, Satinder Singh, Sant Singh Sekhon, Manmohan Singh, Dalip Singh Dip, Giani Maha Singh, and many more have written extensively on his life, literary work in Punjabi, history, and work on Gurbani. He is the most respected and honored person of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries in the history of the Sikhs. Since many scholars have written volumes and volumes about him on his contributions for reproducing and interpreting the old literature on history of the Sikhs and lives of the Guru, I would like to take this opportunity to present him as the patron, protagonist, and savior of the Punjabi language – the language used by our Gurus to preach their teaching and who preserved this language of our forefathers who migrated from the Central Asia as the Aryans who settled in the land of five rivers, Punjab. There has always been great efforts to degrade and to eliminate the dominance of the Punjabi language from the minds of the early Aryans and from the minds of the present population of the Punjab. It was Bhai Vir Singh and other Sikh scholars, especially Prof Gurmukh Singh and Ditt Singh, who had saved this language and had given its proper status among the recognized languages of the world. For his contributions in Punjabi literature he has been honored with doctorate of Oriental Learning (Honoris Causa) by the East Punjab University in 1949 and he is recognized as the **Father of Modern Punjabi Literature** by many Sikh scholars.*

### INTRODUCTION

Bhai Vir Singh (1872-1957), a poet, scholar and exegete, was a major figure in the Sikh renaissance and in the movement for the revival and renewal of the Punjabi literary tradition. His identification with all the important concerns of modern Sikhism was so complete that he became to be canonized as **BHAI**, the brother, of the Sikh order, very early in his career.

#### **Inherent Religious and Literary Characteristics [2, 9, 10]**

Bhai Vir Singh (addressed as **Bhai Sahib** henceforth) was born on December 5, 1872 in Amritsar. His father, Dr Charan Singh, traces its ancestry back to Diwan Kaura Mall (d 1752), the Vice Governor of Multan under Nawab Mir Mu'in ul-Mulk. Baba Kahn Singh (1788-1878), grandfather of Bhai Sahib, was the first in his family to be sworn as a Sikh.

Bhai Sahib's mother's kinship belong to another rich tradition of scholarship in exegesis of the Giani

school, going back to the times of Guru Gobind Singh. His maternal grandfather, Giani Hazara Singh, compiled a lexicon of the **Aad Guru Granth Sahib (AGGS)** [1], and wrote commentary on *Bhai Gurdas' Varan*.

As a school boy, Bhai Sahib, used to spend a great deal of his time in the company of Giani Hazara Singh under whose guidance he not only learnt the classical and non-classical languages, Sanskrit, Persian, and Braj, but also received grounding, both theoretical and practical, in the science of Sikh exegesis.

He learnt Persian and Urdu from a Muslim Maulavi in a Mosque and Giani from Harbhajan Singh, a leading classical scholar in Sanskrit and Sikh literature. He then joined the Church Mission School, Amritsar and took his Matriculation examination in 1891. At this school he learnt English and acquired familiarity with modern writing through English courses. At this school, the conversion of some of the students proved a crucial experiment which strengthened his own religious

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conviction.

From this school he also learnt that how efficacious is the written word as a means of information and influencing a person's innermost being. Bhai Sahib noticed that publication of small tracts and books on Christianity started by Christian Missionary at Ludhiana had a tremendous effect on the minds of the Punjabis. For example, it is evident from their efforts that as many as 50,000 tracts and books were distributed at Hardwar in 1844 and then 68,000 in 1849 (Punjab District Gazetteers, Vol XV A Ludhiana District and Malerkotla state Missionaries.). When the Sikh kingdom was taken over by the British, the Christian Missionary established their missionary centers at Amritsar, Taran Taaran, Batala (the centers of Sikhism) and as far away as Peshawar. From the above example, Bhai Sahib visualized an idea of spreading Sikhism on the very similar line through publications and distribution of literature on Sikhism in Punjabi, the language of the Punjab people.

### ROOTS OF THE PUNJABI LANGUAGE

It is necessary to give a brief description on the roots of the Punjabi language. The people of the Punjab are called '*Punjabi*' and their spoken language is also called '*Punjabi*'. The name '**Punjab**' was given to this land of five rivers by the Persians, who invaded it and settled here permanently around 1000 CE. Before their invasion this land was called by various names. It was also known as '*Septa Sindhva*' for some time because long time ago seven rivers used to flow on this land. The river *Sarsvati* on the Eastern side dried up and the river *Sind* on the Western side, forming the boundary, was not considered as a river of this land. Consequently, the land on which these rivers were flowing was named as '*Punjab*' (*Punj* = Five, *Ab* = Water/River) by the Persians [11]. (*Punjab* and *Punjabi* are also spelled as *Panjab* and *Panjabi*, respectively.)

The point I would like to make is that the language spoken by the Punjab people today is the result of continuous development of the language from the time of the arrival of the Aryans (during 1300-1000 BCE). When the Aryans of Central Asia came to Punjab they brought their language with them which had some influence of Persian, because the Aryans, who came to Punjab, had come through Persia after settling there for some time. This language had the phonetic and morphological system analogous to that observed in such languages as Greek, Latin, Celtic, etc. Their language was composed of various dialects of old Indo-Aryan languages (Indo-European Languages) [4-8]. Around 400 BCE Panini, a Punjabi grammarian,

synthesized *Sanskrit* or Perfect Language (*Sans + Krita* means adorned, cultivated, perfected), from the local spoken language of the Punjab. At the same time he named the spoken language (Old Indo-Aryan Languages) of the people of the Punjab as *Prakrit* (means not adorned or arranged, i. e. not Sanskritized) [4-8].

The newly synthesized language was adorned to such an extent that it was so difficult that it remained the language of the Brahmins only and the common people continued to speak the original language, so-called *Prakrit* by Panini. Pei [6] had mentioned that *Prakrit* flourished between 300 BCE and 1200 CE. Therefore, it was the same *Prakrit* of Panini that was named as *Punjabi* by the Persians on their arrival in the Punjab around 1000 CE. It continued absorbing new words, terminology and phrases from Persian, Arabic, French, English etc. and attained the present form. **In fact the *Prakrit* should be called *Ancient Punjabi* because it was developed and spoken in the area that is now called *Punjab*.** During the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE Buddhist Canon was written in the same language, i.e. *Ancient Punjabi* (named *Prakrit* by Panini) that was spoken during that time in the Punjab where Buddhism flourished. Since the Buddhist Canon was known as *Pali Canon*, therefore, its language was also called *Pali* [6].

Without looking into the history of the languages of the Punjab, many scholars erroneously linked the origin of *Punjabi* from Sanskrit. The comparison of some words of *Punjabi* with *Prakrit* and *Pali* [7] indicates that it was more close to these ancient languages from which Sanskrit was evolved. It means Panini synthesized Sanskrit from ancient *Punjabi* (named *Prakrit* by him). In other words *Punjabi* gave birth to Sanskrit.

When the ancient *Punjabi* (*Prakrit*) moved away from Punjab, it underwent great dialectical changes: towards West it became *Lahndhi*, *Sindhi*, *Multani* in the hilly areas of the North it became *Dogri*, towards South-East it became *Haryanvi*, *Rajisthani*, *Marathi*, *Gujrati*, towards East it became *Brij* or *Braj* (Hindi), and so on. However, the language of the Punjab remained *Punjabi*, spoken with various dialects. Nevertheless, the languages of Southern India have originated from source other than ancient *Punjabi*.

It is worth noting that the *Vedas* were written in ancient *Punjabi* (*Prakrit*), the same is true about *Brahmanas*, *Upanishads* and some *Sutra*. All these great religious works were later translated into Sanskrit from 200 BC onward. This is supported by the fact that Sanskrit was synthesized around 400 BC by Panini and

these Great Works were written before 400 BC when there was no Sanskrit [4-8, 12]. The irony is that even when all the religious works were translated into Sanskrit, it still could not attain the status of spoken language of the people.

According to Sahib Singh [12, p 15-16], The language of Vedas is different than that of old Sanskrit. The scholars have named it '**First Prakrit**'. The language spoken by the people at the time of Asoka, The Great, (273-232 BCE) was *Pali*, that was called '**Second Prakrit**'. The Vedic language was modified and was named '**Sanskrit**'. Simultaneously, the so-called *First and Second Prakrit* languages continued to develop and were named differently in different regions of their developments for example, *Magdhi* in Magad and Bihar, *Shoorsaini* in Uttar Pradesh, *Maharastri* in Maharashtra, etc. These languages are called *Apbransh* by modern scholars. These languages continued to exist upto 11<sup>th</sup> century. The irony is that Sahib Singh [12] failed to understand that the language spoken by the people of the land of seven rivers or of the five rivers, should be named after the area but not by any fictitious names, like *Old Sanskrit*, as given by Sahib Singh [12] and other scholars or *Prakrit*, as given by Panini. Although the land of these seven or five rivers was called by different names by different historians, the right name, **the Punjab**, of this land was given by the Persians according to its characteristic of five rivers. Since the language of the Punjab is called **Punjabi** in these days, therefore, the ancient language of the Punjab should be called **Ancient Punjabi**.

It is a matter of pride that even after the partition the Punjab into two, one belonging to India and the other to Pakistan, both parts are called Punjab, i.e. India Punjab and Pakistan Punjab and the peoples of both the Punjabs speak *Punjabi*.

#### Use of Punjabi Language by the Sikh Gurus

The above fact about the status of Punjabi language has been innocently ignored by Sahib Singh and also by many Sikh historians and Sikh theologians. However it were the Sikh Gurus who preferred to use the spoken language, *Punjabi*, of the people of the Punjab for writing their Bani rather than the Sanskrit, the language of the Brahmins that could not become the spoken language of the common people. Muslim Sufi, like Baba Shaikh Farid (1173-1265 CE) was writing his Bani in *Punjabi* even before Guru Nanak, which has been incorporated into the AGGS by Guru Arjan in 1604 CE [1]. Later on many Muslims, Hindus, and Sikhs started to write in *Punjabi*.

Before Guru Angad (1504-1552 CE) the Punjabi language was written in various scripts [5]. The oldest

script used most was the mixture of alphabets of *Takari* and *Landhae* before the arrival of Islam, thereafter, the Persian/Arabic scripts dominated in the Punjab because of the languages of the rulers. Guru Angad modified *Takari* and *Landhae* alphabet that is now called *Gurmukhi* script or *Gurmukhi Lipi*. Now some scholars say that it was Guru Nanak who developed Nanaki (*Gurmukhi*) script without citing any authentic reference. Anyhow, the language of the Aad Guru Granth Sahib (AGGS) [1] is *Punjabi* in *Gurmukhi Lipi* (script) having different dialects, like, *Lahndhi*, *Sindhi*, *Multani*, *Gujrati*, *Dogri*, Ancient *Punjabi* (*Prakrit or Pre-Sanskrit*), a little *Hindi* (that is a modification of *Urdu* - a mixture of Persian and *Punjabi*), and vocabulary from Persian, Arabic, and other languages. Thus, the *Punjabi* language, used by the Gurus of the Nanakian School to write their Bani, has its roots in the old Indo-European languages rather than in Sanskrit, a synthesized language.

**It is wrong to say that Punjabi originated from Sanskrit rather it gave birth to Sanskrit.** This statement may appear wild to some linguistics, who are under the influence that Sanskrit gave birth to all Indian languages. The alphabet of *Gurmukhi* script was further improved to pronounce different sounds introduced by the Persians, the Arabs, the English, the French, etc. in the *Punjabi* language. Similarly, punctuation system and other modern grammar rules have been adopted for the *Punjabi* language to make it more acceptable and applicable for communication and expression. Nevertheless, the author strongly feels that more research is needed to trace out the roots of the *Punjabi* language; to give it its right status in the Indo-European Languages; and to coin *Punjabi* terms equivalents to that of scientific and technical terms of today.

#### PLIGHT OF SIKHISM AND PUNJABI LANGUAGE

The extinction of the Sikh sovereignty in the Punjab and rise of British Raj brought tremendous changes in the social, ethical, political, and religious affairs of the people of the Sikh kingdom, Punjab - area across the Sind River in the West and up to Sutlej river on the eastern side, Kashmir, Himachal on the northern side and Haryana on the southern side . Furthermore, introduction of Christian missionary work in the Punjab awakened the people about the vulnerability of their faiths to the Christianity. People belonging to all the three major religions were being exposed to Christianity and some of their followers were embracing Christianity. The people of the Punjab started to form new societies to protect their faiths from the onslaught of Christianity.

To weaken the opposition to the Christianity the British rulers started to create frictions among the people of these three faiths. These groups were: The Hindus and the Sikhs as a group, Arya Samaj, on one side and the Muslims on the other side. Then the British started to create wedge between the Hindus and the Sikhs by adopting the policy of 'divide and rule' by strengthening the hands of stooges in all the three religions to create hatred among them. The Hindu Arya Samajists openly started to propagate that Sikhism is a part of Hinduism and there is nothing new in the Nanakian Philosophy, incorporated in the Aad Guru Granth Sahib (AGGS), and it was based on the philosophy of Vedas and Puranas and other Hindu religious scriptures. The Arya Samajists even started to denigrate the Sikh Scriptures, Sikhism, Sikh Gurus, and Sikh history by mythologizing the lives of the Sikh Gurus, misinterpreting the Sikh Scriptures and mixing fictions with historical facts and intertwining of Vedantic and Vaisnavite motifs. This also gave an opportunity to the Hindus to merge Sikhism into Hinduism as they did with Buddhism and Jainism. The Hindu Arya Samajists also created wedge between the Sikhs and Muslims. These activities of the Hindu Arya Samajists force the Sikh Arya Samajists to fall out of the main stream of Arya Samaj. For details see Khushwant Singh [ 11: Vol II, pp 136-147]. It is an eye-opener for the Sikhs to defend Sikhism and Sikh philosophy from the new onslaught by the Hindu RSS and the Sikh RSS.

### RENAISSANCE OF PUNJABI LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE [2, 9-11]

Keeping in mind the importance of power of word and publication of literature to transform the mind of the people, which was learnt from the Church Mission School, Amritsar, Bhai Sahib decided to write and publish literature in *Punjabi* to strengthen *Punjabi* language and to dissemination Punjabi culture, Sikh literature, Sikh history, and Sikh Scriptures. His first attempt in writing was Geography textbooks for schools. He set up a lithograph press in collaboration with Bhai Wazir Singh, a friend of his father.

Bhai Sahib started taking active part in the affairs of Singh Sabha movement to promote its aims and objectives, he launched the following publications and organizations:

- In 1894 the **Khalsa Tract Society**,
- In November 1899 a Punjabi Weekly, The **Khalsa Samachar**,
- In 1902 the **Chief Khalsa Diwan**,
- In 1908 the **Sikh Educational Society**, and
- In 1908 the **Punjab and Sind Bank**.

Bhai Sahib stressed the autonomy of Sikhism by nourishing and sustaining it by an awakening among the Sikhs about their distinct theological and cultural identity. Through his single-minded cultivation of Punjabi language as the medium of his theology, scholarly, and creative work, Bhai Sahib resolved the cultural and religious dilemmas, which the Sikhs faced at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The Khalsa Tract Society periodically made available under the title, **Nirguniara**, low cost publications on Sikh theology, history and philosophy and social and religious reforms. He used this journal, *Nirguniara*, as a vehicle for his own self-expression and some of his major creative works originally serialized then these were published as books:

- An epic, **Rana Surat Singh** (1907), and
- A novel, **Baba Naud Singh** (Subhag Ji De sudhar Hathin Baba Naud Singh) (1907), in book form in 1921,
- Lives of Gurus – **Guru Kalgidhar Chamatkar, Guru Nanak Chamatkar, and Asht Guru Chamatkar**.

He also published the following novels:

- **Sundari** in 1898,
- **Bijay Singh** in 1899,
- **Satwant Kaur I** in 1900, and
- **Satwant Kaur II** in 1927.

Through these novels he encouraged the readers about the fortitude and human dignity.

In these novels Bhai Sahib weaves into the narrative numerous motifs of social reforms, moral teaching and religious preaching and depicts several situations of inter-communal and urban-rural confrontation.

Bhai Sahib also wrote some poems and lyrics:

- **Dil Trang** in 1920,
- **Tarel Tupke** in 1921,
- **Lehrian de Har** in 1921,
- **Mutak Hulare** in 1922,
- **Bijlian de Har** in 1927, and
- **Mere Saian Jio** in 1953.

And also wrote a play: **Raja Lakhdatta Singh** in 1910.

With the increase of *Punjabi* use in writing there was a need of glossaries, lexicons, encyclopedias, and exegetical work. Therefore, Bhai Sahib revised and enlarged Giani Hazara Singh's **Sri Guru Granth Kosh** of 1898 which was published in 1927.

He also reprinted the old texts:

- **Sikhan di Bhagat Mala** in 1912,
- **Prachin Panth Parkash** in 1914,
- **Puratan Janam Sakhi** in 1926,
- **Sakhi Pothi** in 1950, and many more.

His annotation of Bhai Santokh Singh's magnum opus, **Sri Gur Pratap Suraj Granth**, was published from 1927 – 1935 in 14 volumes covering 6668 pages.

He has published the **Panj Granthi Satik** in 1906, and **Jap Sahib Satik** and Satiks of many other Banis.

### Denigration of Punjabi Language, Guru Nanak and the Sikh Theologians

The Hindu Arya Samajists were openly denigrating Guru Nanak and his Granth and Sikh theologians. Punjabi language was degraded to the level of language of the backward class by the protagonists of Sanskrit openly. For details see Khushawant Singh [11: Vol II, pp 139-140].

Bhai Sahib had always in his mind the way people were treating the *Punjabi* language. He had admitted this fact in the Preface of his novel, *Bijay Singh* as follows [2]:

"ikqy ikqy kvvX dy Al ikur ies krky idkwey hn ik bhq l k pjj wbl nllj tkl bl l kih kyad lhw dlyhn ik rcnw dy BSn ies bl l ivc nhln pihwey j skdy ["

Then he emphasizes that the progress of the country and the Panth is in showing figurative speech (metaphoric not literal) and literary embellishment in the *Punjabi* writings:

"dšryeh ik pjj wbl dl qr-kl bl dš qy p d dl qr-kl dw iek A h ["

I would like to quote such figurative (metaphoric) speech in Bhai Sahib's writings. For example, "isig j l sc dl bwal l ivc sihjysihj yaqr dy ictly dy j l ivc f b gey ieh inrny krnw ik riq ik-Qy ktley qW ikqy irhw, isig j l nllieh Bl Btl igAw ik mll scx kl l gw sw? ij kr ikxy pQl nll pVildAw nyjy kridAw kridAw A-KW j y nwl hl l w dpeley qW aukw kw nhll idsdw, ij vj Drq l dl fufi iq-kl cwl A-KW nllnhll idsd l qy KVql Bwsdl hY kw icr isig j l dl sc ies prkwr dl sth dSw ivc phlt l h e l eiall Pr Ampxy Amp ivc Awel, ij kr pwxl ivc if-gw prK pihl yqW Q-l y nllj wdl hY pr pwxl dw sBwA Pr as nllawqy l Y Awatdw hY Pr Q-l y j wdl hY qy Pr apr Awatdw hY ie-kr hl ihc ipc ivcl qur l qW qr inkl dw hY pr Axj wx ds XwW gqy Kw kyj l ivc hl sm d bwx l wdl hY [...]

pr Aš vj yqW isig j l nllieh Skql Ašl gxdwiek hōgel ij-kr isAw dl mllh Kl kq nllpwl y dw dK qW idlw hY pr Kql l el gkkr l hll hY [

hx isig j l hS ivc Awey cur cPry nZR dy dly dlvax l-gy.... ij vj stj dy isr l kwatly hl riq Aw plhcdl hY iqv l isig j l dy ahl y hly hl ipCy ahnW dy sk plhq j l mhwrwj ikxy rK hY l ie-kr inkl y ij vj piqAW dy Fr hY l PnlAr inkl Awv [...]"

Sometimes, out of the way Bhai Sahib has to introduce the situation in which Sikhism and the Sikhs were passing through to divert the attention of the readers towards the need of revitalization of Sikhism. For example,

"is-K Ampxw Amp Btl l bly sn, grprb, gr mrXidw j-Qpdl aukl hl nhll sl [ sgl rsm l irvij swry AnXkql hōgey sn [ is-K iesqrlAw ivc k e l Aihsw is-kl dw nhll sl [ sgl sDw dl rkwt e h sn [ byml thy kth Ampxl inrd qW CVkyiml gByivc pYrl sl [ is-K kl glAw vwl y dw AndrS Bl rhy sn [ cPjral Ašysimw bxweygey sn ik is-KW dl hsq l gth hōj wey [...]

and j o Xqn bcwE dy vwsqy hō rhy sn, ahnW ivc mK ieh smiAw igAw sl ik ipCl y AndrS, krnlAw qy aqSih Ar isKXij nk j lvn is-K m-nW dšymxyil Alldj in [...]

ieh kth ieqhws plw kr skdw sl pr CwixAw piqAW ieqhws plp q G-t sl [

ies krkyj l dl nll ieqhws, srv ipK ieqhws Aqy ieqhws rvweqW iek-qr krky Ašl bl l ivc vrxn krn dl scl gel, j o Aw is-K vl smj skn [ (From Preface of *Bijay Singh*)

Khushwant Singh's analysis of his writings is as follows [ 11: Vol II, pp 425-426]:

"*Vir Singh's early writings has to be viewed with reference to the social and political conditions at the end of the nineteenth century. His novels, which made him known in millions of homes, were written at the time when the Punjabis were beginning to doubt the achievements of their ancestors. English historians harped on the crude and corrupt Sikh rule, which they had replaced by an 'enlightened' one. Sanskrit scholars belittled the religion of the Sikhs as a poor imitation of the Vedas and ridiculed its forms and symbols as barbarous. Vir Singh's novels, Sundari, Vijay Singh, Satwant Kaur, and Baba Naudh Singh, had as their central theme the heroism and chivalry of the Sikhs and ethical excellence of their religion. This was set in contrast to the servility of the Hindu masses and the oppression of the Pathan and Mughal rulers. The Sikhs devoured Vir Singh's novels with enthusiasm and gratitude. But with the passing of that peculiar mental state, the novels lost their appeal. To the*

present-day reader, they appear somewhat insipid. Their place is not in literature but in history.”

I personally do not agree with the last statement of Khushwant Singh in his above analysis because contributions of Bhai Sahib in the renaissance of Punjabi literature and Sikhism will always carry a deep respect by every Sikh and every Punjabi.

### SOME SELECTIONS FROM BHAI SAHIB'S WRITINGS

Finally, I would like cite a few *Rubaian* of Bhai Vir Singh which became most quoted in the Punjabi literature as well as in the religious teaching and hope they will stay afresh and important in the future.

The *Rubae* most quoted by the preachers and *Kirtanias*:

ਸੰਬਖੁ ਲੀਲਾ ਡੀ ਕੀ ਵੀ [   
 ਦਿਠਿ ਦਿਲਿ ਚਿਤਿ ਪੀਠੀਆ [   
 ਕੀਠਿ ਚਿਹਿਰੀਠੀ ਖੀ ਡੀ ਡੀ ਆ [   
 ਰੀਠੀ ਨੀ ਏਸ ਵੀ ਠੀ ਆ [   
 ਚਿਠੀ ਚਿਠੀ ਕੀ ਸੀ ਆ [   
 ਚਿਠੀ ਚਿਠੀ ਆ ਚਿਠੀ ਚਿਠੀ [   
 ਆ ਚਿਠੀ ਆ ਚਿਠੀ ਆ [   
 ਚਿਠੀ ਚਿਠੀ ਆ ਚਿਠੀ ਆ [

The *Rubae* that has been posted by Dr MS Randhawa on the front gate of Zakir Hussain Rose Garden in Chandigarh

ਫੀਲੀ ਨੀਲੀ ਚਿਠੀ ਨੀ ਸੰਬਖੁ [   
 ਆਸ਼ੀ ਠੀ ਮਿਠੀ ਡੀ ਠੀ ਆ [   
 ਚਿਠੀ ਚਿਠੀ ਆ ਚਿਠੀ ਆ [   
 ਆ ਚਿਠੀ ਆ ਚਿਠੀ ਆ [   
 ਚਿਠੀ ਚਿਠੀ ਆ ਚਿਠੀ ਆ [   
 ਚਿਠੀ ਚਿਠੀ ਆ ਚਿਠੀ ਆ [   
 ਚਿਠੀ ਚਿਠੀ ਆ ਚਿਠੀ ਆ [   
 ਚਿਠੀ ਚਿਠੀ ਆ ਚਿਠੀ ਆ [

A couplet on back of the brochure of **Bhai Vir Singh Sahitya Sadan**, New Delhi [3].

ਸੰਬਖੁ ਚਿਠੀ ਚਿਠੀ ਆ ਚਿਠੀ ਆ [   
 ਚਿਠੀ ਚਿਠੀ ਆ ਚਿਠੀ ਆ [

(Kamdi Klai)

“You met me in my dream, I quickly grasped you in my arms. But you were merely a light (imagination) that could not be grasped, Thus my arms were left trembling.”

His services to literature, arts, philosophy, religion and humanity were formally recognized. The religious

people honored him with the title of **Bhai Sahib**. The East Punjab University bestowed on him the degree of **Doctorate of Oriental Learning** (Honoris Causa) in 1949. The *Sahitya Akademi* and several other literary institutions honored him and the Government of India bestowed on him the **Padama Bhushan**. In a survey conducted by *The Hindustan Times* to find out who is **most influential Sikh of the twentieth century**, Bhai Sahib Vir Singh emerged as the clear favorite. As a part of the tercentenary celebration of the Khalsa, the Government of Punjab posthumously honored Bhai Sahib Vir Singh with **Nishan-I-Khalsa**. This award was received by Bhai Sahib's grand-daughter, Ms Rajinder Kaur Bali from S. Parkash Singh Badal, the Chief Minister of Punjab at the ceremony held at Anandpur Sahib on 13<sup>th</sup> April, 1999.

Bhai Sahib expired on June 10, 1957 after spending his whole life of 75 years in reviving and uplifting status of the Punjabi language and Punjabi literature to their right position in world's languages and literary work. He is recognized as the **FATHER OF MODERN PUNJABI LITERATURE** by almost all the present and the past Punjabi scholars.

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