

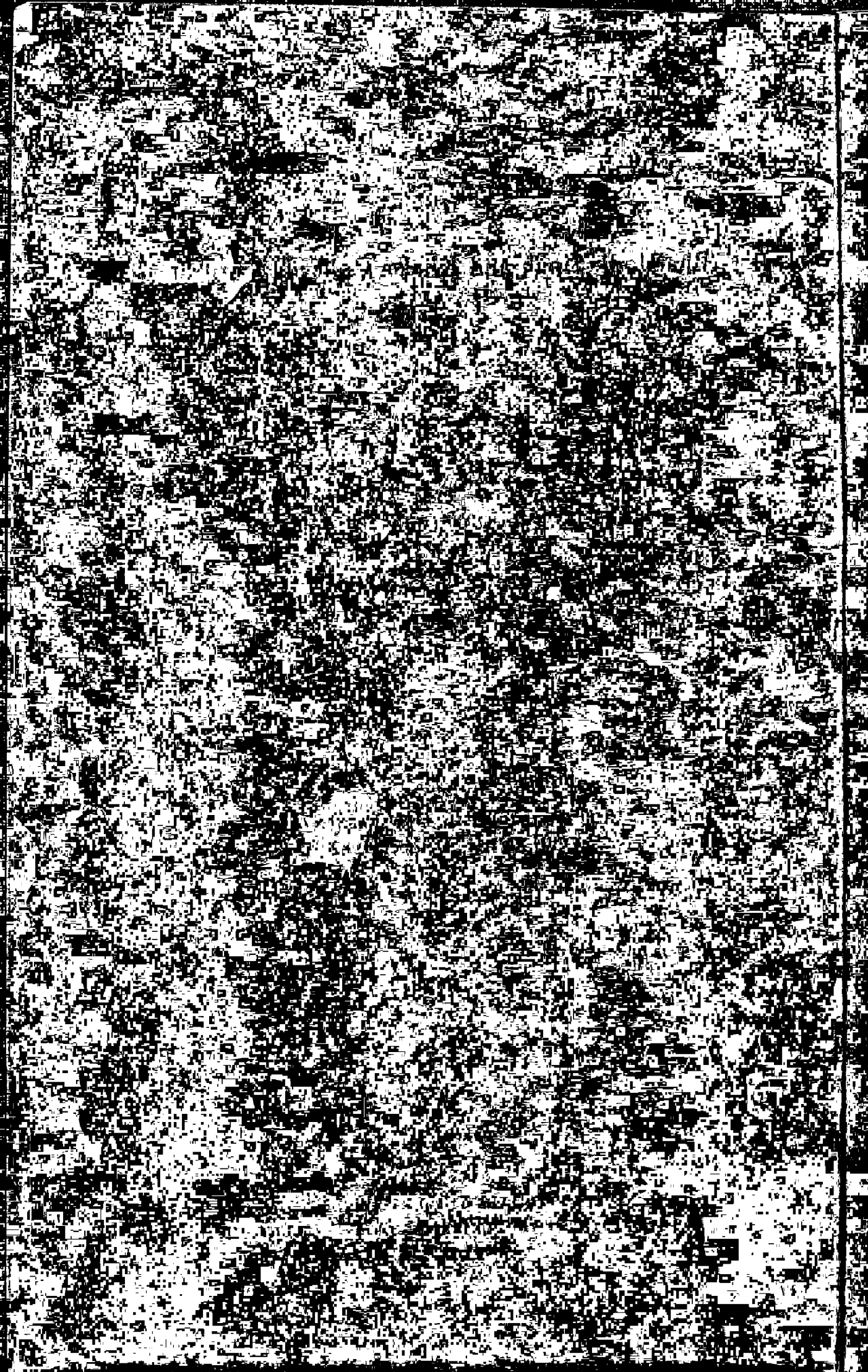
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Bhai Jodh Singh and Khalsa College, Amritsar

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## Bhai Jodh Singh and Khalsa College, Amritsar

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The Khalsa College, Amritsar, is a symbol of the Sikh Renaissance. It has done pioneering work in the spread of western education among the Sikhs. Hardly one finds an eminent Sikh who had not received his education at this great institution. As far as Bhai Jodh Singh is concerned, he can be counted as one of the builders of Khalsa College. He was associated with it for half a century.

The Khalsa College, Amritsar was established in the last decade of the nineteenth century. It was the result of the efforts of the Singh Sabha Movement which had undertaken to spread education among the Sikhs. The Singh Sabha Movement had the following objectives :

- i) To restore Sikhism to its pristine purity;
- ii) To edit and publish historical and religious books;
- iii) To propagate current knowledge using Punjabi as medium and to start magazines and newspapers in Punjabi;
- iv) To reform and bring into Sikh fold those who had diverged from the right path;
- v) To ensure the association of the British government with the educational programme.<sup>1</sup>

The foundation stone of the Khalsa College, Amritsar, was laid by Sir James Broadwood Lyall, the Lieutenant-Governor of the Punjab on the 5th March, 1892. At first it was started as a school and later on the college classes were added to it in 1897, and its first principal was Mr. Vere O' Ratigan who was succeeded by Dr J. Campbell Oman in 1898. Dr Oman was not only an excellent teacher of English and Physical Science but was also an eminent orientalist devoted to the study of Indian philosophy, with particular attention to ascetic and mystic cults and creeds among the Hindus and Muslims. He had been a Professor of the Government College Lahore for over twenty years. He left the Khalsa college in 1899. He was succeeded by M.G.V.Cole.

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1. Ganda Singh, *History of Khalsa College, Amritsar*, Amritsar, 1949, p. 2.

He stayed in the Khalsa College for about a decade, that is, from 1900 to 1910. His tenure was eventful. Before 1902 there were only four buildings—the Dharmsala, the College and School hostels and the Principal's house. The main college building was still to be raised. The college and the school classes used to be held in the dormitories of the college hostel for want of proper building. The total strength of the staff of the college and school was twenty four among whom five were the graduates.<sup>2</sup> The compound was full of wild shrubs and thorny bushes and there were huge mounds of earth and uneven ground everywhere bearing dreary aspect and dreadful outlook.

The collection of funds for erecting the main building and its necessary equipment and creating an Endowment Fund was a tough problem. With the British Government's active patronage and the efforts of the Managing Committee these problems were solved by collecting donations. On April 12, 1904, on the occasion of Baisakhi, a grand Darbar was held wherein leading government officials and the chiefs of the Phulkian States assembled. An appeal was made for funds. Bhai Kahan Singh of Nabha addressed the audience on behalf of Maharaja Hira Singh of Nabha. A resolution was passed to the effect that the Sikh zamindars should pay six pies in a rupee with the land revenue. All the chiefs present gave donations, and in this way funds were collected for the construction of the college building.

#### **Bhai Jodh Singh as Professor of Divinity, 1905-12**

Bhai Jodh Singh born in 1882 in village Ghungrilla, district Rawalpindi, on May 31, 1882, passed his Matriculation in 1897 and his intermediate in 1900. He became tutor of the sons of Sir Sunder Singh Majithia in June 1902 and in the same year he joined the third year class in the Khalsa College. At this time he was also actively engaged in missionary activities along with Sardar Sunder Singh Majithia in organizing the Chief Khalsa Dewan. In 1904, Bhai Jodh Singh passed the B.A. examination by standing first in the Punjab University. In the annual prize distribution function of the college, he got a special prize from Raja Hira Singh of Nabha who presided over the function. He passed his M.A. in Mathematics in 1906 by securing first position in the University.

Bhai Jodh Singh was appointed as Professor of Mathematics in the Khalsa College in 1905. But Sardar Sunder Singh Majithia who was

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2. *Ibid.*, page 44.

the Secretary of the College persuaded him to take up the Divinity classes. He proved very successful as a teacher and was very popular among the students. But there occurred certain events that compelled Bhai Jodh Singh to leave the college. These events were :

(1) **“Labour of love Nonsense” incident :**

The Managing Committee of Khalsa College appointed Sardar Dharam Singh of Gharjakh, district Gujranwala, as honorary Engineer for the college building. He alongwith Sardar Ram Singh, who later became the Principal of Arts College, Lahore, altered the plan of the college building. This plan was shown by Sardar Sunder Singh Majithia, the Secretary of the Committee to Major Hill who was then the Agent of the Punjab States. He explained to Major Hill that S. Dharam Singh was a very competent engineer and had agreed to work for the college as “a labour of love” (without any payment). Major Hill remarked “Labour of Love is non-sense.” Consequently, the Punjab Government appointed a British Engineer. This incident caused wide spread resentment among the Sikhs in general and Sikh students of the College in particular. There was an agitation among the students. When the new engineer came on the site to supervise the work, the students hooted him. One of them said, “What was he doing”, another said, “He was digging his grave.” Since Bhai Jodh Singh was Professor of Divinity and was very popular among the students, this agitation was attributed to him.<sup>3</sup>

(2) Mr. G.K. Ghokhle, a well-known Congress leader, paid a visit to Amritsar in 1907. Since Bhai Jodh Singh was one of his admirers, he went to receive him at the railway station along with several students. The students brought him to Khalsa College where he delivered a speech. Next day Bhai Jodh Singh went to Lahore to hear him. All this was not liked by the British Government who wanted to have firm control over the college.

(3) During the Christmas of 1907, a group of Sikh intellectuals led by S. Sunder Singh Majithia went to Sindh for missionary work. There, they were impressed by Muslim Educational Conference. Later on Sikh Educational Conference was founded on those very lines. Bhai Jodh Singh took prominent part in that organisation. That too was not to the liking of British government.

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3. Bhai Jodh Singh's statement for Oral History Cell, Punjab Historical Studies Deptt., Punjabi University, Patiala.

In 1908 new constitution was framed for the Khalsa College Managing Committee and the Government took control of the Management. Sardar Sunder Singh Majithia had been the Secretary of the College since 1902. He resigned in 1912 when he found that his voice was no longer effective there. Moreover, the Commissioner of the Lahore Division was made the President of the Managing Committee and he was invested the powers to terminate the services of any member of the staff. Bhai Jodh Singh was asked by the Principal R.G. Wright to proceed on leave for six months. Later on his resignation was accepted in June 1913 and Bawa Harkrishan Singh was appointed as Professor of Divinity.<sup>4</sup>

### Turn in the Tide

Again there was a change in the Managing Committee in the end of 1920. This time Sardar Sunder Singh Majithia became the President of the Managing Committee and Sardar Harbans Singh of Attari became its Secretary. Now Bhai Jodh Singh was associated with the college as a member of the Managing Committee. He also joined as Professor of Divinity in the College in 1924 and remained there in this capacity upto 1936. During this period he wrote the following important works to spread the ideals of Sikhism :

1. What is Sikhism (*Sikhi-ki-Hai*)
2. Gurus and Vedas (*Guru Sahib te Ved*);
3. *Gurmat Niranay* (Philosophy of Sikhism).

### Bhai Jodh Singh as Principal of Khalsa College (1936-52)

His Highness Maharaja Bhupinder Singh of Patiala proposed the name of Bhai Jodh Singh for the principalship of the college by writing to the President of the Managing Committee, "It will be in the interest of the institution itself and the broader interests of the community with which goes the name of the institution itself to have at the head of its affairs a man of eminence and reason of Prof. Jodh Singh."<sup>5</sup> Bhai Jodh Singh was appointed Principal in June 1936.

Soon after his appointment as Principal, Bhai Jodh Singh had to face a big strike. The trouble began in January and ended in June 1937. It was intensified by political factions because it synchronised with the provincial assembly elections. Sir Sunder Singh was then seeking election in the Batala Sikh constituency and he was pitted

4. Ganda Singh, *op.cit.*, page 74.

5. *Ibid.*, page 115.

against Jathedar Teja Singh, an Akali candidate. The election reflected rival groups in the Khalsa college staff and students. Since Sir Sunder Singh was the President of the Managing Committee of the Khalsa College, the opponents wanted to distract his attention. But Bhai Jodh Singh handled the situation very successfully. He did not provoke reaction among the students. Picketing by the students and strike did not disturb his peace of mind. All this continued but ultimately the well-known Akali leader Baba Kharak Singh came to save the situation and carried on negotiations and gave the following decision :

“I have studied the situation in all its aspects on the spot and it is my earnest desire, in the interest of the institution, to have the differences of the parties amicably settled, I therefore, request the college authorities to take back the rusticated students and hope that they will kindly do so. I advise the students to call off the strike and honour their *Alma-mater* their principal and other members of the college staff and observe discipline.”<sup>6</sup>

Bhai Jodh Singh remained Principal of the Khalsa College from 1936 to 1952 for sixteen years. During his stewardship the college made tremendous progress on all sides. On the cultural side the college made a positive contribution by collecting source material for writing history of the Sikhs. One of the special features in which Bhai Jodh Singh took keen interest was the nourishment of Sikh History Research Department.

#### **The Sikh History Research Department**

The Sikh History Department of Khalsa College Amritsar grew to be a unique feature of that great institution. It was established in 1930 and Sardar Ganda Singh was the founder research Professor of this department. It is an institution in itself especially when there were no universities to conduct research in the Punjab history. The chief objective of this department was to conduct research in the history of Punjab from 1469 to date. The result of the researches conducted in this department were published from time to time. Following publications were made in the time of Bhai Jodh Singh :

#### **1. Banda Singh Bahadur by S. Ganda Singh.**

It was based on contemporary sources. For the first time the account was brought on the historical footing,

6. *Ibid.*, pages 120-21.

2. Another rare manuscript the *Jang Namah* by Qazi Nur Muhammad (Persian Ms.) was annotated, edited and translated by Dr Ganda Singh. Its introduction was written by Sir J.N.Sarkar.

3. On the occasion of first death centenary of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, 'Maharaja Ranjit Singh Centenary Volume' was brought out in 1939. It was edited by Prof. Teja Singh and Ganda Singh.

#### 4. Diwan-i-Nanak-Shah

It was a Persian translation of Guru Arjan's *Sukhmani* lying in Bibliotheque Nationale, Paris. It had been brought by S. Umrao Singh Shergill, elder brother of Sir Sardar Sunder Singh, and was published by Sardar Ganda Singh for the Sikh History Research Department in August 1935.

#### 5. Maharaja Kaura Mal Bahadur by Dr Ganda Singh, 1942.

It was a biography of Dewan Kaura Mal based on contemporary sources. It was in Punjabi.

Dr Ganda Singh served in this Department from 1931 to 1949 and during this period he honey-combed the whole of India to collect material relating to the history of the Sikhs. With his efforts, the research library of Sikh History Research Department became the first rate repository of historical records. For collecting material long tours were undertaken and every effort was made to collect material from far off places. Different scribes worked to prepare the transcribed copies or extracts copies of manuscripts. The following table will give an idea of the manuscripts transcribed from the libraries noted below for the Sikh History Research Department :

<i>Name of the Library</i>	<i>No. MSS. Transcribed the reform</i>
Khuda-Baksh, Bankipur, Patna.	20
State Library, Rampur (U.P.).	11
Asafiya Library, Hyderabad.	12
Asiatic Society, Bengal, Calcutta.	1
Dar-ul-Alum Deoband (U.P.).	2
Jamia Usmania Library, Hyderabad.	1
Sir Salar Jang Library, Hyderabad.	2
Punjab University, Library, Lahore (Pakistan).	10
Dyal Singh Library, Lahore (Pakistan).	1
Muslim University, Aligarh.	4



BHAI JODH SINGH AND KHALSA COLLEGE

Bharat Itihas Shamshodan Mandala, Poona.	4
National Library, Paris.	1
India Office Library, London.	3
<b>Private Collections</b>	
Sir J.N.Sarkar's collection, Calcutta.	5
Bhai Sahib Dr Vir Singh's collection, Amritsar.	2
Prof. S.H.Askari's collection, Patna.	3
Dr Ganda Singh's collection, Amritsar (Now at Patiala).	2
Record Office.	
Council of State Sawaye, Jaipur.	2
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Total	85
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One of the efficient scribes who worked for Sikh History Research Department was Munshi Faiz-ul-Huq. He worked at various places under the wise guidance of S. Ganda Singh.

After the departure of Dr Ganda Singh for Patiala, Bhai Jodh Singh was very keen to fill this vacuum and he appointed the writer of these lines in place of Dr Ganda Singh. My first historical monograph entitled "*Maharaja Ala Singh and His Times*" was prepared with the persuasion and inspiration of Bhai Jodh Singh. Later on it was published by the Department.

It may not be out of place to mention here that whatever work in the Sikh History Research Department was done was due to the constant encouragement of Bhai Jodh Singh and Bhai Vir Singh who can be called the builders of this Department.

One of the different articles which were written for this  
purpose was written by Mr. [Name] and was published in  
the [Name] of [Date]. It was a very interesting and  
valuable contribution to the literature of the subject.  
The author's name is [Name] and he is a well-known  
authority on the subject. His work has been widely  
cited and is highly regarded. The article was  
published in the [Name] of [Date] and was  
a very valuable contribution to the literature of  
the subject. The author's name is [Name] and he  
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of the subject.

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