

Shahenshah-e-Kalam

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Bhai Vir Singh was born to a devout Sikh family in Amritsar on December 5, 1872. It was Gurubani that influenced him the most and he resolved to mould his life on its ideals.

Next to Gurubani, he was influenced by the poetic compositions of Bhai Gurdas Ji whose works are regarded by the Sikhs as a veritable key to the proper understanding of Guru Granth Sahib. He also studied the works of great Hindi, Sanskrit, Persian and English writers, which made him all the more devout in mystic and Vedantic study.

But Gurubani was his spiritual fount. In particular, the *Japji* of Guru Nanak, the *Sukhmani* of Guru Arjun Dev Ji and the *Akal Ustat(i)* of Guru Gobind Singh Ji pervade all his thoughts.

He was rare combination of writer, poet, thinker, philosopher, saint, reformer, linguist, humanist, spiritual teacher and ideal Sikh. Above all, he was a great mystic. Till date, Bhai Vir Singh is referred to as, with all justification, the father of modern Punjabi literature. All educated Punjabis who know something of the Punjabi language believe that in this language Bhai Vir Singh occupies the same place as Mohd. Iqbal does in Urdu and Rabindranath Tagore in Bengali.

He started writing in Punjabi when no author of repute dared (or cared) to use this medium for this art. The fashion was to write in Brij Bhasha Hindi, Urdu, English etc and Punjabi was not considered suitable for literary works of a high order. It was Bhai Sahib's genius that wrought the miracle of taking Punjabi to the top of literary heights and placing it side by side with the other proud languages of the world. He has enormously enriched his mother-tongue both with the volume and high quality of his works in poetry and prose.

The thirst of his soul for God had been the driving force of his life and the inspiring source of his art. It was his special domain to enlighten about the higher mystic truths and take readers to the realm of ecstatic joy and beauty of the soul through his mastery of simple words and phrase in the description of his own mystic experiences. "Rana Surat Singh", his masterpiece, contains a unique treasure of mystic thought which lights the path of many a seeker of truth and guide him to his goal in easily understandable and heart-reaching language.

His works include "Kalgidhar" Chamatkar, Guru Nanak Chamatkar, Asht Guru Chamatkar, Matak Hulare, Bijlian De Har, Lehar Da Har, Preet Vina, Sundri, Baba Nandh Singh, Bijai Singh and Mere Saiyan Jio. Bhai Sahib was a great journalist too. He was only 18 when he started The Khalsa Samachar, which has ever since been successfully published.

Bhai Sahib's efforts had a great share in the creation and development of several institutions of public good for example, the Chief Khalsa Dewan, Khalsa College, Amritsar, the Khalsa Orphanage, the Homeopathic Hospital, Amritsar, et al which show his great longing to serve humanity and to relieve its sufferings.

He was heaped with fame and honours. Padam Bhusan being one among many. So said Dr. S. Radhakrishnan: "Bhai Vir Singh invites our attention in this world of easy-going contentment with small things to the goal of man's life:

They say man is the crest of the wave of life: But what is man, who is lost in the smoke of the fire that burns within him!

For he is lord of creation only if he be lord of himself'

In the land of the five rivers Bhai Vir Singh may well be said to be the sixth river: for he has always been known to his people as a river of culture and learning, one who has flowed for several years like a nourishing influence into their lives and sustaining them.

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