

1. What was the state of the Sikh affairs in general before the Singh Sabhā movement?
2. How does the quote about Sikhs being a forgotten tribe, only spoken about in museums, makes you feel? Taking into account what you know about Sikh history during the time of the *Gurūs* how would you react to the quote?
3. Have you ever felt the need to convert or leave Sikhī (move away from Sikh beliefs)? Why? Or why not?
4. Do you believe we are going through a similar time now with so many young Sikhs giving up their identity and older Sikhs following rituals that are not in line with Sikh thoughts? Or do you think the opposite is true and we are benefiting from the Singh Sabhā movement even today? Highlight experiences that you have had to support your answers.

Answer to Question 1:

Students should say something about how the Sikhs were becoming more superstitious and following rituals. Many of them were converting to other faiths and losing their distinct identity.

Answers to Questions 2-4:

This will vary based on the student's experience. Please be open to all answers and guide discussion accordingly.

Professor Gurmukh Singh (ਗੁਰਮੁਖ ਸਿੰਘ)

Gurmukh Singh (1849-1898), one of the prominent figures of the Singh Sabhā (ਸਿੰਘ ਸਭਾ) movement, was born in Kapūrthālā (ਕਪੂਰਥਲਾ) on 15 April 1849. His father Basāvā Singh (ਬਸਾਵਾ ਸਿੰਘ), a native of Candhar (ਚਨਧੜ) village in Gujrāmvālā district (now in Pakistān), served as a cook in the royal household of Kapūrthālā. Gurmukh Singh was a promising child and caught the fancy of their master, Prince Bikram Singh (ਬਿਕਰਮ ਸਿੰਘ), who began taking personal interest in his upbringing and education. After he finished school in Kapūrthālā, Gurmukh Singh was admitted to Government College, Lāhaur (ਲਹੌਰ). He, like his supporter Bikram Singh, felt concerned about the state of Sikh society, and when Srī Gurū Singh Sabhā (ਸ੍ਰੀ ਗੁਰੂ ਸਿੰਘ ਸਭਾ) was set up at Ammritsar in 1873, he left off his studies without graduating, with a view to propagating reform. He was instrumental in having Pañjābī (ਪੰਜਾਬੀ) included in the curriculum at Oriental College, Lāhaur in 1877. He himself was appointed the first lecturer to teach the language. Professor Gurmukh Singh did not let his academic duties obstruct his Singh Sabhā work. He was secretary of the Singh Sabhā, Lāhaur, which he had helped to establish in 1879. Likewise, he was the first chief secretary of Khālsā Divān, Ammritsar, founded four years later.

Gurmukh Singh's zeal for radical reform brought him into conflict with the president of the Divān, Khem Singh (ਖੇਮ ਸਿੰਘ). During the Vaisākhī (ਵੈਸਾਖੀ) session of the Divān in April 1884, Khem Singh, being a descendant of Gurū Nānak Sāhib (ਗੁਰੂ ਨਾਨਕ ਸਾਹਿਬ), sat on a special cushioned seat in the presence of Gurū Granth Sāhib (ਗੁਰੂ ਗ੍ਰੰਥ ਸਾਹਿਬ). Gurmukh Singh was angered and said that none could claim such a privilege in a Sikh sangat where all sat together as equals, without any distinctions of class or status. In the same meeting he opposed the proposal sponsored by the Rāvalpīṇḍī (ਰਾਵਲਪਿੰਡੀ) Singh Sabhā, which was under the influence of Khem Singh, to enable non-initiated (non-Ammritdharī - ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤਧਾਰੀ) Sikhs to enroll as members, if the name Srī Singh Sabhā be changed to Sikh Singh Sabhā. In May 1885, a book entitled Khurshīd Khālsā was published by the brothers Bāvā Nihāl Singh (ਬਾਵਾ ਨਿਹਾਲ ਸਿੰਘ) and Sarmukh Singh (ਸਰਮੁਖ ਸਿੰਘ) of Chichraulī (ਚਿਛੜੌਲੀ), followers of Khem Singh. It contained statements judged to be contrary to Sikh principles. The book also pleaded for the reinstatement of Dalīp Singh as the ruler of the Pañjāb and the appointment of Thākūr Singh Sandhāmvālīā (ਸੰਧਾਵਾਲੀਆਂ) as his prime minister.

Gurmukh Singh proposed that the Khālsā Divān should publicly dissociate itself from the views expressed in the book. The differences came to a head at the Divālī (ਦਿਵਾਲੀ) session of the Divān, when a representative of Rājā Bikram Singh of Farīdkoṭ (ਫਰੀਦਕੋਟ) surprised Gurmukh Singh by reading out a statement of charges against him. Gurmukh Singh resigned from the Divān, with representatives of several Singh Sabhā's following him.

A division in the Divān was now inevitable. Gurmukh Singh and his supporters called a meeting in Lāhaur in April 1886 and formed a separate Khālsā Divān, with Sardār Atar Singh of Bhadaur (ਸਰਦਾਰ ਅਤਰ ਸਿੰਘ, ਭਦੌੜ) as president and Gurmukh Singh as chief secretary. The Ammritsar faction retaliated by getting Gurmukh Singh excommunicated through a resolution passed in April 1887, as issued under the seal of Harimandar Sāhib (ਹਰਿਮੰਦਰ ਸਾਹਿਬ). The Khālsā Divān Lāhaur, which enjoyed the support of the majority of the Singh Sabhās, however, ignored the resolution, and Gurmukh Singh continued in office. The death, in May 1887, of his supporter and benefactor Kaṁvar Bikram Singh (ਕੰਵਰ ਬਿਕਰਮ ਸਿੰਘ), meant a great personal loss to him, yet he continued hard on the pace of his

activity. By now he had reclaimed two very energetic persons—Javāhar Singh (ਜਵਾਹਰ ਸਿੰਘ) and Giānī Dī Singh (ਗਿਆਨੀ ਦਿਤ ਸਿੰਘ)—from the influence of Ārya Samāj (ਆਰਯ ਸਮਾਜ) and inducted them into the Singh Sabhā. The three, working as a close-knit team, were henceforth the life and soul of the Khālsā Divān, Lāhaur. They spoke diligently through the press and spread the message of reform and awakening among the Sikh masses.

Education was considered the key to modern awakening and this was one of Gurmukh Singh's persistent concerns. As early as June 1882, a proposal had been made to set up a Sikh college. Soon after the establishment of the Khālsā Divān, Ammritsar, in April 1883, Gurmukh Singh formally placed the motion before it at its special meeting held in June 1883. It was taken up more vigorously later by the Khālsā Divān, Lāhaur. Gurmukh Singh enlisted the cooperation of some government officials, and a 'Khālsā College Establishment Committee' was constituted, with Colonel W.R.M. Holroyd, Director of Public Instruction, as chairman and Mr William Bell, a professor of Government College, Lāhaur, as secretary. The efforts of Gurmukh Singh and other leaders of the Singh Sabhā bore fruit and the cornerstone of the college was laid at Ammritsar on 5 March, 1892, by Sir James B. Lyall, Lieutenant-Governor of the Pañjāb.

To disseminate widely the Singh Sabhā statement of belief, Gurmukh Singh launched, one after another, the Gurmukhī Akhbār (ਗੁਰਮੁਖੀ ਅਖਬਾਰ) and the Vidyārak (ਵਿਦਯਾਰਕ) in 1880, the Khālsā (ਖਾਲਸਾ) in 1885, the Sudhārārak (ਸੁਧਾਰਾਰਕ) in 1886 and the Khālsā Gazette in 1886. These were among the first newspapers and periodicals in Pañjābī (ਪੰਜਾਬੀ), and besides serving the cause of religious reform; they gave birth to a new literary idiom in the language. Gurmukh Singh also published, in 1889, a Jantrī or calendar, called Gur Baras (ਗੁਰ ਬਰਸ), the years of the Lord, the first of its kind in Gurmukhī script. Another work by him is Bhārat dā Itihās (ਭਾਰਤ ਦਾ ਇਤਿਹਾਸ), a history of India in Pañjābī. He also wrote Gurbānī Bhāvārth (ਗੁਰਬਾਣੀ ਭਾਵਾਰਥ), a glossary, in simple Pañjābī, to make Gurbānī more understandable to the common man. The work, however, remained unpublished.

Gurmukh Singh died of a heart attack on 24 September 1898, at Kaṇḍāghāṭ (ਕੰਡਾਘਾਟ), in Shimla Hills, where he had gone to see the Mahārājā of Dhaulpur (ਧੌਲਪੁਰ) regarding a donation for Khālsā College, Ammritsar.

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Giānī Ditt Singh (ਗਿਆਨੀ ਦਿੱਤ ਸਿੰਘ)

Giānī Ditt Singh was a scholar, poet and journalist. He was an eminent Singh Sabhā member and editor. He was born on 21 April 1853 at Kaur (ਕਲੋੜ), a village in Patialā (ਪਟਿਆਲਾ) district of Pañjāb. His ancestral village was Jhalām (ਝਲੀਆਂ), near Camkaur (ਚਮਕੌਰ), but his father, Divān Singh (ਦਿਵਾਨ ਸਿੰਘ), had migrated to his wife's village, Kaur. Divān Singh, a weaver by trade, was a religious minded person who was respected for his piousness. He was an admirer of the Gulābdāsī (ਗੁਲਾਬਦਾਸੀ) sect and sent Ditt Singh at the age of nine, to be educated under Gurbakhsh Singh (ਗੁਰਬਖਸ਼ ਸਿੰਘ) at Derā Gulābdāsīām (ਡੇਰਾ ਗੁਲਾਬਦਾਸੀਆਂ) in the village of Tior (ਤਿਐੜ), near Kharar (ਖਰੜ) in Ropar (ਰੋਪੜ) district. Ditt Singh studied Gurmukhī, Vedānt (ਵੇਦਾਂਤ) and Nīti-Shāstra (ਨੀਤੀ ਸ਼ਾਸਤਰ) at the Derā, and learnt Urdū from Dayā Nand (ਦਯਾ ਨੰਦ), a resident of Tior. At the age of 16-17, he shifted to the main Gulābdāsī center at Caṭṭhiāmṁvālā, near Kasūr (ਕਸੂਰ) in Lāhaur district. Formally initiated into the sect of Desā Singh (ਦੇਸਾ ਸਿੰਘ), he became a Gulābdāsī preacher. Not long afterwards, he came under the influence of Bhāi Javāhar Singh (ਭਾਈ ਜਵਾਹਰ ਸਿੰਘ), a former follower of the Gulābdāsī sect, who had joined the Ārya Samāj. Ditt Singh also became an Ārya Samājist. He was introduced to Svamī Dayā Nand Sarasvatī (ਸ੍ਵਾਮੀ ਦਯਾ ਨੰਦ ਸਰਸਵਤੀ), the founder of the Ārya Samāj, during the latter's visit to Lāhaur in 1877. Soon, however, he and his friend, Javāhar Singh, were drawn into Sikhī through Gurmukh Singh, the main force behind the Lāhaur Khālsā Divān. In 1886, Gurmukh Singh, following the establishment of the Lāhaur Khālsā Divān, parallel to the one at Amritsar, floated the first Pañjābī weekly newspaper, the Khālsā Akhbār. Though its first editor was Giānī Jhaṇḍā Singh Farīdkoṭī (ਗਿਆਨੀ ਝੰਡਾ ਸਿੰਘ ਫਰੀਦਕੋਟੀ), the principal contributor was Giānī Ditt Singh, who soon took over editorship from him.

He had passed the Giānī examination the same year and had been appointed a teacher at the Oriental College. In his hands the Khālsā Akhbār became an efficient and powerful vehicle for the spread of Singh Sabhā ideology. The Khālsā Divān, Amritsar led by Khem Singh Bedī (ਖੇਮ ਸਿੰਘ ਬੇਦੀ) and the ruler of Farīdkoṭ, Rājā Bikram Singh, had Gurmukh Singh excommunicated, under the seal of Darbār Sāhib (ਦਰਬਾਰ ਸਾਹਿਬ), in March 1887. On 16 April 1887, Giānī Ditt Singh issued a special supplement of the Khālsā Akhbār in which appeared a part of his Supan Nāṭak (ਸੁਪਨ ਨਾਟਕ) or Dream Play, a thinly-veiled satire ridiculing the Amritsar leaders and their supporters. One of the victims of the mockery, Bāvā Ude Singh (ਬਾਵਾ ਉਦੇ ਸਿੰਘ), filed a defamation suit against Giānī Ditt Singh in a Lāhaur court. The latter was sentenced to pay a fine of Rs. 5 but, on appeal, was acquitted by the Session's Court on 30 April, 1888. The case dragged for over a year, imposing severe financial hardship on the Khālsā Akhbār. It had already suffered a setback by the death, in May 1887, of its main supporter, Kamvar (ਕੰਵਰ) Bikram Singh of Kapūrthālā. In 1889, it had to be closed down, along with the Khālsā Press. Gurmukh Singh, however, secured, through Bhāi Kānh Singh, help from the Mahārājā of Nābhā (ਨਾਭਾ) and the Khālsā Akhbār recommenced publication on 1 May 1893. Editorship was again entrusted to Giānī Ditt Singh. Giānī Ditt Singh also helped Bhagat Lachman Singh (ਬਗਤ ਲਚਮਨ ਸਿੰਘ) to launch, from Lāhaur on 5 January, 1899, 'the Khālsā', a weekly in English.

Giānī Ditt Singh and his friend, Javāhar Singh, had not publicly severed their connection with the Ārya Samāj even after their initiation into the Sikh faith. The final breach came on 25 November 1888, when, in a public meeting held on the eleventh anniversary of the Lāhaur Ārya Samāj, Paṇḍit Gurū Datt (ਪੰਡਿਤ ਗੁਰੂ ਦੱਤ) of Government College, Lāhaur, and Lālā Murlī Dhar (ਲਾਲਾ ਮੁਰਲੀ ਧਰ) spoke unfavorably about the Sikh Gurūs. This hurt the feelings of Giānī Ditt Singh and Bhāi Javāhar Singh