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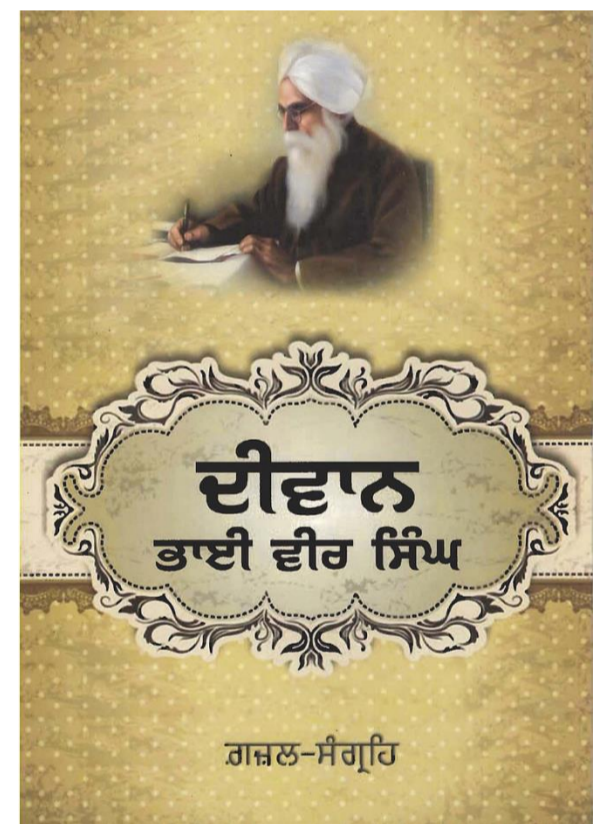
## Public Lecture

# „Beyond the Past: Poetry as a Notation of the Present in the Work of Bhai Vir Singh (1872-1957)“

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Bhai Vir Singh (1872-1957) was a major figure in the colonial and post-colonial Punjabi language literary worlds of the undivided, and then the Indian, Punjab; he is known today, perhaps most centrally, as a defining force in the forging of modern Sikh identity, grounded in a particular approach to the past. He was active across a wide range of genres: he edited historical texts and produced extensive commentaries on them; he produced the first modern play in Punjabi; he wrote historical novels; and he was active in popular printing, for which he produced a wide range of short largely didactic and polemical works. But the genre that he was most renowned for – which has been largely neglected by English-language scholarship, except for pioneering work by Harbans Singh, Nikky-Guninder Kaur Singh, and a few others – was his modernist poetry. Indeed, it was the modernist poetic compilation *Mere Sāṭāñ Jīo* (1953) that earned him the Sahitya Akademi award in 1955, in the first year that the award was ever granted, and a year before his death. This paper explores aspects of Bhai Vir Singh's modernist poetic work, to consider what examination of this body of poetry can tell us about his work as a whole, and its complex figuration of time, the past, and the future.



Date: Wednesday, 25.05.2022  
Venue: South Asia Institute, Geb. 4130  
Raum 010.01.03  
Time: 4 pm / 16 Uhr s.t.