The Role of the Press in Punjab in Identity Formation amongst the Sikhs, 1905.

Introduction

- The late nineteenth and early twentieth century was as a time when communitarian consciousness was heightening in Punjab.
- In 1873 Sikh intellectuals and elites founded a socio-religious reform movement known as the Sri Guru Singh Sabha.
- The Singh Sabha movement used both the affirmation of a homogenous Sikh identity and the demarcation of religious boundaries, in order to claim a 'distinct space of the Sikhs' within the religious framework of India.

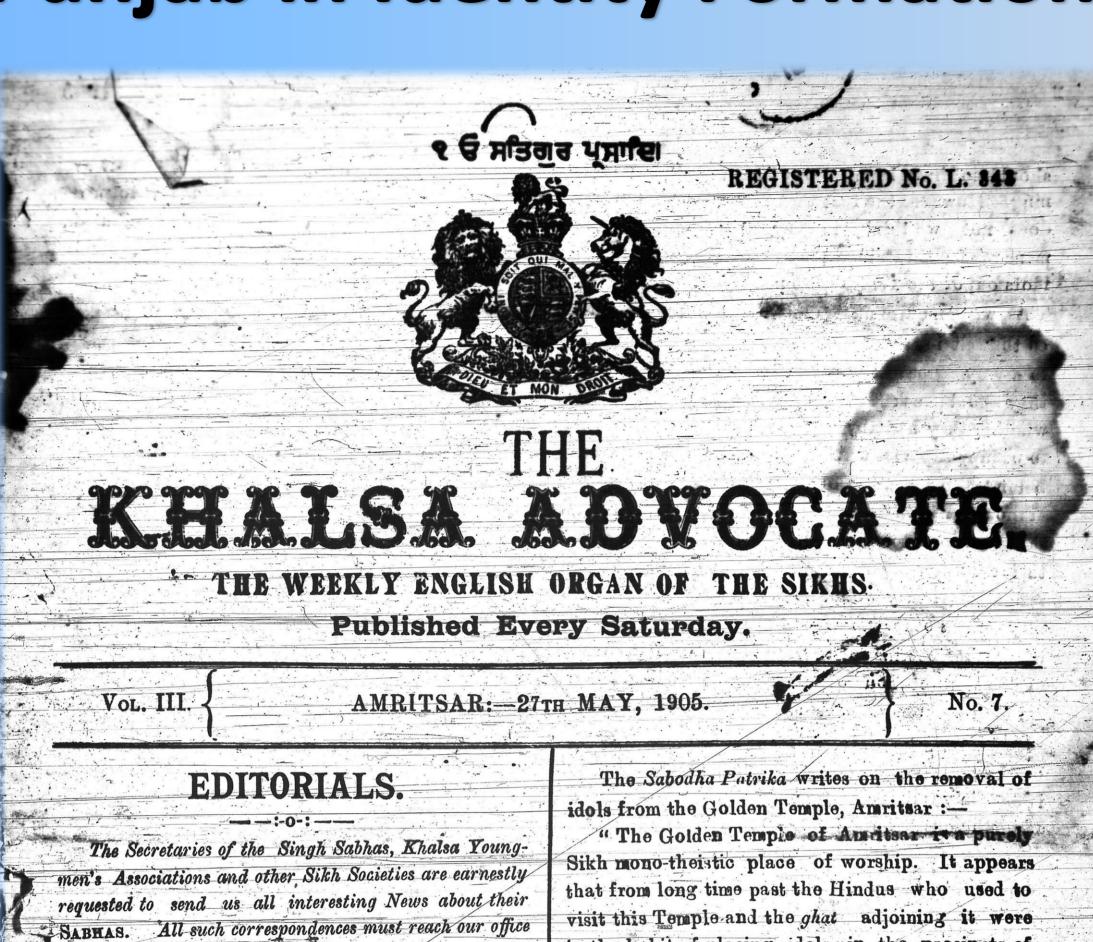
Aims

• To assess the role played by newspapers in the propagation of a homogenous Sikh identity.

Research

- The removal of idols from the precincts of the Golden Temple by Arur Singh the manager of the temple in May 1905 was chosen as a case study.
- 60 articles from four newspapers printed between May and September 1905 were used namely; *The Khalsa Advocate, The Tribune, Khalsa Samachar,* and *Punjab*.





in the habit of placing idols in the precincts of the temple and worshipping them after bathing in the tank close by. This tank is called the "Lake of immortality" and much sanctity is attached to a bath in it. The Bramhans it seems were allowed to occupy certain places on the marble margin of the tank on which they kept the idols ever since the time Amritsar became a place, of pilgrimage. This as may be seen, was an act of forbearance on the part of the managers of the temple. The continuance of this forbearance has been however looked upon by the Bramhans as a matter of privilege and the order for removing the idols, recently issued by the Sikh manager of the Temple has led to the creation of much ill-feeling and dissentions between the Sikhs and Hindus of that place.

"It is admitted by the Hindus that the place is a monotheistic place of worship and the fact that the manager of it—Sirdar Arur Singh is a Sikh shows that it is meant to be so. This being so the intrusion of the idol-worshipping Hindus

References & Further Reading

not later than 2 p. m., on Tuesday, each week.

We are requested by the Secretary Khalsa

College Managing Committee to announce that a

sum of Rs 50,000 promised by the Punjab Gov-

ernment towards the main College Building

Endowment Fund, of the Khalsa College, Amritsar

Thas been paid into the Bank of Bengal, Lahore,

Of the students sent up from the Central Train-

ing College, Lahore, in the Examination recently

held by the Panjab University for the newly

established Bachelor of Training Degree, have all

come out successful; eight being placed in the

1st Division and the remaining five in the 2nd

Division Out of the 13 students only one has

Sikh name i. c. B. Hira Singh B. A, who passes

in the 2nd Division. In this age information

based on statistics only is held trustworthy. But

those that are brought to light everyday disclose

a very deplorably tondent condition of Educa-

on behalf of the College.

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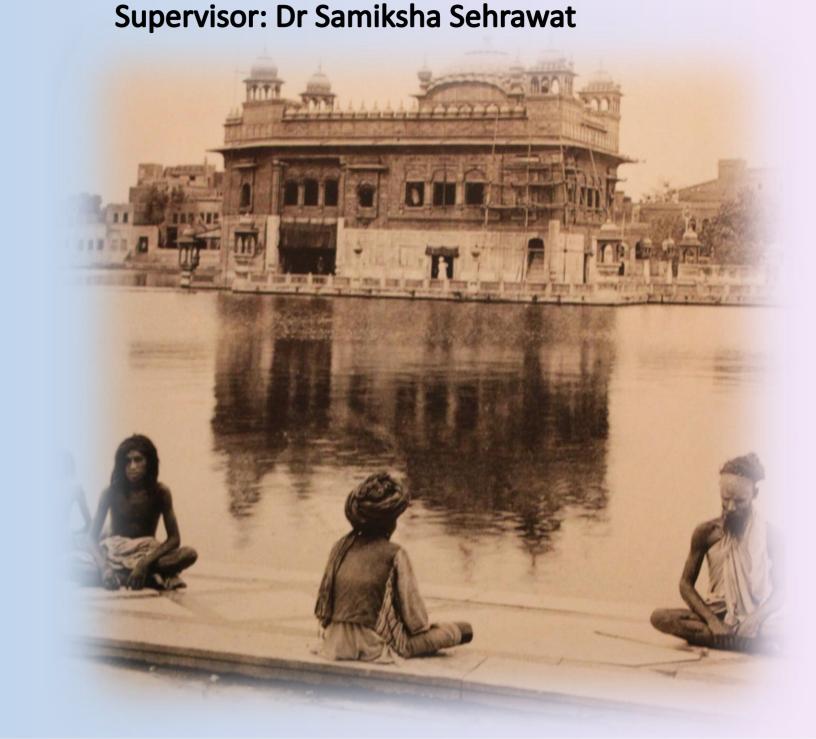
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Conclusions

- Over 70% of the articles discussed the doctrinal boundaries Sikhism and Hinduism, with particular focus on the topic of idol worship as a defining factor of religious identity.
- These articles indicate that the press created a space where the demarcation of religious boundaries could be contested publicly.
- This distancing from the Hindu faith was a key feature of printed work by the Singh Sabha with an influential text published by Kahn Singh Nabha in 1897 entitled *Hum Hindu Nahin* meaning 'We are not Hindus'.
- The concern for laying claim to religious spaces can be seen as a precursor to the of the Gurdwara reform movements led by Singh Sabha activists in the 1920s.
- An article from *The Hindu* newspaper of 2003 entitled 'Are Sikhs Hindus?' illustrates the contemporary significance of this debate.