

A Profile of Mohindra College

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Since the day of its inception, Mohindra College, Patiala, has occupied a place of pre-eminence among the institutions of higher learning in Northern India. For a time, with the exception of Delhi College, Delhi, and the Govt College, Lahore, it was the only institution of its kind in the vast region stretching from Landi Kotal in the North to Hodal (Gurgaon) in the South.

A unique feature of this institution was that, for more than half a century, it did not levy any tuition fee on its students. The boon of free education attracted to its portals students from far and wide areas and gave it an all-India character. This all-India character was further strengthened by the liberal policy of the recruitment of the staff from wherever best talent was available in the country. Its alumni have occupied high positions and achieved distinctions in various walks of life, not only in this country but also abroad.

The college owed its existence and progress to the munificence of the rulers of the Patiala State, which was the premier State of the House of Phul.

The erstwhile Patiala State was one of the most important States in the Punjab and was the largest of the Phulkian States. Its founder Ala Singh was a grandson of Phul after whose name the Phulkian States were known.

The separate existence of the State dates from 1762 when Ahmed Shah Durrani conferred the title of Raja upon Ala Singh.¹ In the beginning of the 19th century the State came under the protection of the British who protected it against any possibility of expansion of territory by Ranjit Singh of the Punjab.

Maharaja Narinder Singh of Patiala helped the British in 1857 struggle.² He was highly influenced by the Britishers and it was in his times that the State began to pay attention to education. The holocaust or the first war of Independence, aroused a national awakening and the Princely States also came under its influence. More or less the States followed the British pattern of education which came to

1. Punjab State Gazetteer Vol. XVII-A, 1904, p. 46.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 50.

flourish in India after the recommendation of Wood's despatch in 1854.

The indigenous system of education in Patiala had four types of schools, They were (a) Pathshalas, (b) Mahajani schools, (c) Dharamsalas, (d) Maktabs³ In these schools, normally syllabus was formed by keeping in mind the local needs and religion. Even for teachers, no specific educational qualifications were required. In the first type of school, normally Brahmins used to send their children to learn religious books and astrology, whereas in Mahajani Schools, Landa script and accountancy were taught. In Dharamsalas, Gurmukhi was taught by keeping in mind the religious books. In Maktabs, Vernacular Arabic or Persian used to be taught. This type of school was more popular as the Persian, and later Urdu were the Court languages.⁴

During the reign of Maharaja Narinder Singh the first State school was established in 1860. Haveli Nizam Khan, near Samania Gate, was used for this purpose. After some time, it was shifted to Haveli Mahant Kashi Gir in Dhak Bazar. To start with, only Sanskrit, Persian and Arabic were taught, Later in 1862, English and Mathematics were also introduced as subjects.⁵ The school was under the direct control of Lala Kulwant Rai Khosla, the then Finance Minister of the State.⁶

In 1863, Lala Kulwant Rai submitted to Maharaja Narinder Singh a Hidayat-Nama containing 27 articles relating to moral and intellectual development of the students in the State.⁷ It may be described as the first education code of the State.

In the year 1870, Maharaja Mohinder Singh was invested with full administrative powers. His first and foremost act of philanthropy was his liberal grant of Rs. 1,06,351 towards the Punjab University College, a portion of which was allotted to the subscription funds of the university College and another part set apart was for the founding of scholarships in commemoration of His Royal Highness Prince Alfred's visit to the Punjab and as memorials to Sir Mcleod and Lord Mayo.⁸

Maharaja Mohinder Singh had a bent of mind towards the propagation of education. It is said that a well known Pundit of Kashiji once told the Maharaja that if he would start providing free education to his subjects, the Lord would give rest to his soul in Swarga. He created a regularly organised education department on the lines of the Education Department in British India on 13 June 1870, with an annual expenditure of Rs. 27,000. Its first Director was a well-known Mathematician

3. *Ibid.*, p. 179.

4. Nurullah and Nack, 'A History of Education in India' (1951), P. V-VIII,

5. *Ibid.*, p. 288.

6. *Ibid.*, n. 1, p. 176.

7. Report of the D.P.I. read at the Head Master's Conference held at Patiala on 14 to 16 Jan., 1927, pp. 1-2.

8. Khalifa, S.M Hasan, A Short Account of the Principal Charitable and Administrative Acts (Calcutta, 1125), p. 1.

Ram Chand Dehvi, who was a former tutor of the Maharaja. He was to be assisted by an inspector Girdhari Lal.

The same school opened by Maharaja Narinder Singh at Dhak bazar, was re-organised and was shifted to Haveli Shamsher Singh (this old building is now near Tribeni Chowk, owned by L. Amar Singh Singla) and it was named as 'Central School.'⁹ The amount of Rs. 27,000 was cutlayed in the budget for education.¹⁰ In May 1876, a committee known as Public Instruction Committee which consisted of 14 senior officers of the State, with Prime Minister as its President, was set up.

The Maktabs of the Patiala city were taken over by the State as branches of the Central School. At that time, in all 24 schools of the State were under this new department.¹¹

In 1872, this Central School was raised to the status of a College and it started imparting education in oriental languages like Sanskrit, Persian and Arabic. Till the end of 1873 it had about 300 students and the expenditure on them was Rs 17,370.¹² In January 1874, this institution was affiliated to the Calcutta University.¹³

In the beginning, the College had been located in the congested lanes of the city. To house it in an open and healthy locality, it was decided to select a suitable site outside the city. The present site of the college was selected for putting up a grand edifice.

In the beginning of 1875, Maharaja Mohinder Singh, went to Delhi to attend the Governor General's Durbar.¹⁴ There he requested His Excellency, Lord Northbrook, the Viceroy of India, to come to Patiala to lay the foundation stone of the College building. The Viceroy agreed to it and on his way to Summer Capital Simla, the Viceroy came to Patiala on the evening of 29 March 1875. The next day i.e. 30 March, in the evening a grand function was organised and the ceremony of the foundation stone laying was performed.¹⁵

The Prime Minister of the State Khalifa Syed Muhammad Hasan read the report about the condition of education in the state. The Viceroy hearing about the

9. Khalifa Mohammad Hasan, *History of Patiala* (Patiala, 1878), p. 621.

10. *Ibid.*, n. 7, p. 4. In 1871, the amount was raised to Rs 60,000 per annum.

11. *Ibid.*, n. 1, p. 176. In 1871, the first Prize distribution of the State was performed by the Maharaja. Teachers were honoured by presentation of Robes and it was ordered that their names should come in 'Patiala Daily' known as 'Patiala Akhbar', p. 642.

12. *Ibid.*, n. 7, p. 3; n. 1, p. 177.

13. Jogindra Singh, *A Peep in Progressive Patiala* (Patiala, 1902), p. 4; also see Punjab University Calendar, (1900-1901,) p. 625.

14. File No. Ec-81-18, Basta No. 45; also see Visit Section, Basta No. 6, 16/1931-32.

15. EC, File No. 194, 1931, p. 13. The others who accompanied Viceroy were, Capt. Nesbith, D.C. of Lahore, and Maharao Mangal Singh of Alwar.

small number of students studying at the college remarked in his speech that "the imparting of high and true knowledge and not the number of the students in the college should be aimed at." He further said that "he very well knew and had talked about it at Delhi, that in matters of education, the attention and generosity of Maharaja was not limited to his own territory and his own subjects but extended to other territories also".¹⁶ In the end of his speech the Viceroy desired that in commemoration of his having been associated in the ceremony of foundation stone, a gold medal with a value of Rs 100 be instituted to be awarded every year to an all round best student of the college. The Maharaja agreed to do so.

*It is interesting to know that at the time of the foundation ceremony, as writes Khalifa Hasan, Hindu rites were observed.*¹⁷ It is believed that the world stands upon the head of a large snake called Shesh-Nag, which is a guardian of the earth. Therefore, a small gold snake in a bottle covered with a silver plate along with gur and oil was placed in the foundations. The European custom of putting some silver and gold coins was also observed.¹⁸

On 8 April, 1876, Maharaja Mohinder Singh dressed himself to go for the distribution of Prizes to the students of Mohindra College at Mohinder Kothi (Presently the office of the Chief Engineer of P.W.D.) when he got a fit of epilepsy and expired after a couple of days at the age of 24.

The grand structure of Mohindra College, a blend of oriental and occidental architecture, got completed in the beginning of the year 1884. The State spent more than five lakhs on it. It is also said that State masons and Jail labour were mainly responsible for the construction of this grand structure.⁹ It is a monument of the earnestness of Maharaja Mohinder Singh to whose munificence it owes its origin.

The opening ceremony of the college building was performed by Lord Ripon the then Viceroy of India.²⁰ This imposing and impressive building was inaugurated on 17 March, 1884 and thus enjoys the rare honour of its association with two Viceroys of India. He paid a tribute to the Late Maharaja Mohinder Singh by calling this building 'a magnificent architectural monument'. He also appreciated its masonry.

Initially, this institution imparted knowledge in classical languages like Sanskrit, Persian and Arabic. Students for Visharad, Maulvi Alam, Munshi Fazil were prepared. For this purpose they were affiliated to Punjab University College,

16. *Ibid.*, n. 9, p. 733.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 734.

18. *Ibid.*, pp. 735-36.

19. The Annual Administration Report of Patiala State, 1884-1885, pp. 134-135.

20. *Ibid.*, pp. 134-138:

Lahore, which was the forerunner of the Panjab University.²¹

After a couple of years, the teaching of the subjects of English and Mathematics was also added and the college started preparing students for entrance examination for which it was affiliated to Calcutta University. Students were also prepared for Thompson Engineering College, Rocrkee. In the same year of affiliation, i.e., 1874 two boys from Mohindra College passed the exams.²²

In the year 1880, the intermediate classes were started and the college was raised to B.A. standard of the University of Panjab in 1887. It was done, to commemorate the 50th year of the reign of Her Majesty Queen Victoria. But these classes could not progress due to the problem of indiscipline. Many students left Mohindra College. Even the Principal had to submit his resignation. The new Principal Mr. Atal K. Ghosh carried on the working of the college with a small number of Arts students in the college.²³

In 1891, a state education code was framed on the lines as existed in British Indian Education Department, by Mr. Simes, the English Tutor of Maharaja Rajinder Singh. He proposed in the code that there should be a Principal in the grade of Rs. 250-400 and two professors in the grade of Rs. 150-250.²⁴ The Principal was also to be a teacher of one of the subjects like English, philosophy or Mathematics.

Mr. Simes also proposed rates of fees in the College. He proposed admission fee of Rs. 2 and 8 Annas and fees for F.A., B.A. and M.A. as Re 1, Rs. 2 and Rs. 2 and 8 Annas.²⁵ Two scholarships for B.A. and four for intermediate were proposed. The condition laid for them was that they must have studied in any of the state schools. The rate of scholarships was Rs. 10 for 1st class B.A., Rs. 8 for 2nd class B.A., per month for 2 years. For F.A., it was Rs. 8/- for 1st class and Rs. 6 for 2nd class per month for 2 years.²⁶

From 1896 to 1904, the number of students in the college was on the decline. The average strength was around 25 to 35 students in Arts. The gradual decline in the strength was a cause of concern to the Regency Council and Political Agent who were looking after the administration of the State on behalf of the minor Prince, Maharaja Bhupinder Singh.²⁷

In the year 1903, Major Dunlop Smith, Political Agent of Phulkian and Bahawalpur States, appointed Mr. H.T. Knowlton, inspector of schools on special

21. *Ibid.*, n. 7, p. 13.

22. *Ibid.*, n. 7, 14.

23. Bhagat Singh, *Mahendra College Circular* (September 1969), p. 3.

24. Simes, *Education Code* (Lahore, 1891), p. 24.

25. *Ibid.*, p. 25.

26. *Ibid.*, pp. 26-27.

27. The Annual Administration Report of Patiala, 1904, pp. 23-25.

deputation, to go into the details of the conditions of Education in Patiala State.²⁸ On 21 October, 1904, Mr. Knowlton submitted his report and also suggested various means of improvement of school and college administration.²⁹ He reported :³⁰

The maintenance of Arts classes in Mohindra College costs the State an amount of Rs 10,000 per year. The college exists solely for the purpose of granting higher education to state subjects. In the present year, i.e. 1904, only 14 State subjects are in the F.A. and B.A. classes. In other words, Rs. 700 per head is the cost. Is the State receiving a fair return for this outlay ?..The abolition of the college is a question to be decided by the Regency Council. I suggest that Patiala subjects students can be given stipend for education in more efficient colleges of the British India.....to maintain the college as a first grade college, the education budget needs an outlay of more than Rs 90,000, which is not possible at the moment.

He further suggested :³¹

If the college is abolished, Rs 4,000 can be spent on 20 State subject scholars in any good institution and Rs 6000 thus saved can be spent in maintaining a Normal school for Primary School teachers at Patiala.

The suggestions of Mr. Knowlton were not accepted by the Regency Council as it appeared that Mr. Knowlton gave more importance to the Commercial aspect than the social and welfare responsibility of the State. Perhaps the remarks of Lord Northbrook at the time of foundation laying ceremony came to its rescue.³²

Thus the most damaging report of Mr. Knowlton could not close this institution. Had it been done, this grand alma mater with whom the destinies of thousands of scholars have been associated, would have presented a different picture.

In 1906, Edmund Candler, took over the reign of the college administration as Principal. The Council gave more funds to the institution and there was gradual increase in the number of students.

Mr. Candler was an ex-serviceman and was a member of Col. Young Husband's Tibet Campaign in 1904. He was a strict disciplinarian. He used to visit hostel everyday. It is also said that in summers, he used to call students in the evening for games and swimming. The Patiala canal adjoining the college premises

28. H T. Knowlton, *A Report on the Condition of Education in the Patiala* (Lahore, 1904), p. II.

29. *Ibid.*

30. *Ibid*, pp. 56, 57.

31. *Ibid.*

32. *Supra*, p. 4.

was used for this purpose.³³

During the session 1908-9, when Maharaja Bhupinder Singh took the reigns of Government in his own hands the total number of students on the rolls of the college was 112. Their distribution was like this—1st year = 37, IInd year = 40, IIIrd year = 19, 4th year = 16. Out of them only 70 were state subjects and 42 were outsiders.³⁴

In 1910, the results of the B A class was very bad as 16 students appeared and only 8 were to qualify and similarly in F.A. 40 appeared and 15 passed it. Mr. Harbans Singh got the Northbrook Medal by securing IInd division and standing first in B.A. in the college.³⁵

There were only 33 boarders in the Hostel.

The condition of the college library was very deplorable as only Rs. 283 were earmarked for the purchase of the books during the session of 1910.³⁶

For the first time in the college history, a tutorial group system was introduced.³⁷ Another landmark was that 'Old Students Association' had its first meeting in this session under the Chairmanship of Principal Candler.³⁸ In the end of year 1912, a part of the oriental classes were shifted from the college campus, M.A. Mathematics classes were also started in this year.³⁹

There was a gradual improvement in the number of students from 1910 onwards. During the time of Principal T.L. Vaswani (later on known as Sadhu Vaswani), the number of students rose from 267 to 317.⁴⁰ In the same year, a part of the college library was shifted to the upper story of the college building.

The F.Sc. classes were opened in 1920 and a small museum and botanical garden was also attached to the science department.⁴¹

33. Interview with S. Devinder Singh Chahal an old student of the college,

34. The Annual Adm. Report, File No. 18/1965, Bikrami, pp. 13-16.

35. Basta No. 43, File No.19/1966, Bikrami, EC-43, pp. 1-3.

36. *Ibid.*, p.1

37. *Ibid.*

38. In 1953, this association had a revival. Mr. Kesho Ram Passey, Judge of the High Court was elected as its President, Prof R.G. Verma as Vice President and Prof. Janak Singh as its Secretary. Rs 2 was annual subscription per member. This association had their two annual dinner meetings. But later on due to unknown reasons, it went dormant. In 1967, during Dr. Bhagat Singh's time, it again had its revival and regular meetings. But during Principal Joginder Singh's time in the year 1985, the association was revived with a bang. Now the association has its constitution, office bearers and other requirements. The present function of its own type has been organised under the aegis of this very organisation.

39. Panjab University Calendar, 1912-13 (Lahore, 1913), p. 542.

40. The Annual Administration Report of Patiala, 1918, p. 43.

41. Panjab University Calendar, 1920-21, p. 612.

In the year 1922, during the times of Principal Manmohan, the number of students swelled to 415 M.A. Philosophy was also started. The same year, M.A. Mathematics which got closed due to some reasons was again started.⁴²

In 1922, Maharaja Bhupindra Singh engaged the services of a town planner for giving a face lift to the Patiala City. In this report it was suggested that the area between the Samania gate and the Mohindra College should be made a part of the college campus.⁴³ It was planned that the entry to this magnificent edifice should be from the Samania Gate. But it did not materialize for unknown reasons ⁴⁴

The college boarding house was initially constructed with the main building to accommodate 80 boarders. But with the passage of time, and with the increase of number of boarders, in 1930, a branch hostel was rented out.⁴⁵ It was also decided that the first floor of the hostel should also be constructed at an early date. But the construction of the first floor started way back after partition.⁴⁶ The Warden of the Hostel used to live at the first floor of college building. Prof. K.K. Mukerjee remained warden for a long time.

A unique feature of Mohindra College was that till 1930, no fees were charged from the students, though the idea of fees in F.A., B.A. and M.A. was suggested in the Sime's education code.

In 1931, a small sum of fee was firstly levied on non-subjects of Patiala State at the rate of Rs 4 p.m. for F.A., Rs 5 p.m. for F. Sc. and Rs 6 for B.A. Besides this an admission fee of Rs 5 and Rs 10 as security deposits were also collected ⁴⁷

In 1933, in an 'arjdasht'⁴⁸ dated 7 July, 1933 put up by Niranjjan Prasad Khosla, the then Foreign Minister, urged the Maharaja to levy fees on the State Scholars also. He wrote that "the Principal of Mohindra College also agrees with him for the levy of these fees". Maharaja accepted the request on the condition that "students who have already joined the college should not be levied any fees."

In the same year, the Minister of Education proposed hike in the rates of the fees, but the Principal of the college did not agree to it and thus no change was

42. Basta No. 48, File No. 471/1979, Bikrami, p 112 ; also see Panjab University Calendar, 1925-26, p. 654.

43. Patrick Geddes, *A Report of Town-Planning of Patiala City*(1922), p. 27.

44. *Ibid.*, p. 32.

45. Annual Administration Report of Patiala, 1929-1930, pp. 98-99.

46. File No, EC-87-5, p. 117,

47. Basta No. 92, File No. EC-4-93, 1931. In Govt. College, Lahore, the rates of fees were Rs 10 p. m. for F.A. and Rs. 12 p.m. for B.A. Although the non-state subjects requested Maharaja in a petition for this discrimination but it was ruled out.

48. Basta No 94, file No EC-3, 95., pp. 33-35.

made. In 1938, it was decided to increase the rate of fee by Rs 1/- for F.A. and Rs 2 for B.A.⁴⁹

When the State started imposing fees on the students, the Education Minister inquired about the grant of fee concessions to the scholars. Principal B.N. Khosla reported back that the Patiala State Scholars were regularly getting full fee and half fee concessions whereas this concession was not available to the non-Patiala State Scholars. The percentage of fee concessions were like, full fee concession to 5% students and half fee concessions to 10% students of each class. Brother concessions were also granted to the students.⁵⁰ The Patiala non-state subjects were not entitled for fee concessions.⁵¹

During twenties and thirties, Mohindra College had a galaxy of teachers. Among them Prof. K.K. Mukerjee was the most outstanding who was known as the backbone of the cultural life of the college. The Vice-chancellor of Panjab University while recommending Mr. Mukerjee to Patiala Darbar wrote:⁵²

I should regard any college as fortunate in securing his services as a member of the staff.

Prof. Mukerjee served five Principals namely Mr. E. Candler, T.L. Vasvani, Mr. Man Mohan, A.K. Sharma and Mr. B.N. Khosla.

Principal Candler once remarked about Mukerjee "A man who would be very difficult to replace".⁵³ Prof. Mukerjee was incharge of Dramatic club. It was a practice at that time that an English play was staged every year. He staged Shakespearean plays like Twelfth Night, Merchant of Venice, King Lear and As you like it. The last play staged in 1928, was so much liked by Maharaja Bhupinder Singh that it was staged on three consecutive nights in the college campus. Prof. Mukerjee himself used to act in all these plays. He was the founder of the college Humor Society, later on Jolly Club. Humorous subjects like, 'The Art of Weeping', 'The Decline and Fall of a Mustache' or 'Nosology (Nose Digging)'⁵⁴ were generally picked up for discussion.

Prof. Mukerjee also holds the credit of publishing the first college Magazine named 'Mahendra'. T.L. Vaswani wrote "He had contributed to the college stage and edited with ability the college Magazine."⁵⁵

49. Annual Administration Report, 1938-1939, p. 117.

50. Basta No. 95, EC-90-13, p. 17-19.

51. Basta No. 95, EC-5-95, pp. 33-35.

52. K.K. Mukerjee, *Rose Garden of Panjab* (Patiala, 1973), pp. 12.

53. *Ibid.*, p. 9.

54. *Ibid.*, 14.

55. *Ibid.*, p. 13.

Besides Prof. Mukerjee, Prof. M.R. Kohli, an economist, was another celebrity among the staff. Later on he became the Founder of the New Bank of India. Prof. Pritam Singh of Economics Department became a follower of Baha'i religion. He dedicated his life to the cause of Humanity.

In the History Department, Prof. S. N. Banerjee's name must still be nostalgic among his students. He was a great disciplinarian, a great scholar and a prolific writer. He was commissioned by the Patiala Darbar to write History of Patiala State. He also held the charge as keeper of State Records.

During the forties and fifties, Mohindra College had very eminent names in the list of staff members. By all comparable standards they were exceptionally gifted teachers in their respective fields. For instance, the college had Dr. K.L. Budhiraja, Professor of Chemistry, who became a commissioner after being promoted to I.A.S., Dr. H.K. Bhattacharya, a name in English Literature, who became Principal of the college in late forties, Dr. L.D. Mahajan, Professor of Physics, who was later appointed Principal of Government College, Ludhiana, Principal Teja Singh who had an eminent ranking in the world of Punjabi literature and Dr. A.C. Kapur who authored many excellent books on Political Science. Likewise, equally renowned names like Prof. Balwant Singh, Prof. Avinash Kant Sharma, Dr. Gobind Singh Mansukhani Prof. O.P. Sharma, Prof. R.G. Verma, Prof. Dr. Bhagat Singh, Prof. Pritam Singh, Prof. Gursewak Singh. Prof. Harbel Singh etc. added to the quality of staff in the last thirty years. Their names and fame were quite well known throughout the state of Punjab. Because of their devotion and qualitative academic pursuits, the college came to be recognised as a premier seat of learning.

Ever since its affiliation to the Panjabi University in early sixties, Mohindra College has come to be recognised as the premier institution. This status is truly reflected in its explosive expansion of student and teacher communities, number of courses being serviced at the post and under-graduate levels and also the expenditure being incurred on the maintenance of this institution. Infra-structural facilities like the library, sports facilities, swimming tank, canteen, open-air theatre etc. have shown the same trend in regard to growth and expansion over the years.

The number of students admitted to various courses has risen to nearly 2200 in the last one or two years. It was only 570 in 1938 and more than 1000 in 1948. The staff which had only 3 members when the college was started has now 108 members. Likewise, the office staff number now nearly 60. The library which had a stunted growth in early years of the present century has a catalogue of nearly 65000 books and an active subscription list of nearly 40 magazines. The college hostel now accommodates 150 boarders.

Besides the quantitative expansion, Mohindra College has also been adding

to the number of courses being serviced at the under-graduate level. Honours School classes in four subjects have been introduced in recent years. New subjects like Music, Fine Arts, Psychology, Defence Studies, Linguistics, Physical Education, Sociology, etc. are being serviced now. At the post graduate level, the college manages the servicing of five subjects.

It is difficult to epitomise the history of this great institution in such a meagre space. Itself the progeny of the boundless bounties of a 'Philosopher King' Maharaja Narinder Singh, the college has covered the journey of well over a century in a regal style and has ~~sedulously fostered around itself an aura of laudable achievements by its alumni~~. These scintillating achievements skirt all fields of human activity, i.e., Education, Sports, Culture, Civil and Defence Service, Industry, Commerce, Business, etc., Today it stands head and shoulders high amidst the seminaries of learning in the Northern India and has become a symbol of hopes and aspirations of numerous scholars engaged in the pursuit of education and learning. As in the past, its sprawling campus, its spacious well-equipped laboratories, its well-stocked library and, above all, its dedicated teaching fraternity, hold out rich promises to the future generations also. May this great Institution become sempiternal !



What peaceful hours I once enjoyed !
How sweet their memory still !
But they have left an aching void,
The world can never fill.

—William Cowper