

IV/2016

NISHAAN

NAGAARA

**Tercentenary of
Banda Singh Bahadar
The Sovereign Sikh State
Historical Sikh Monuments**



Prakash Utsav 2017
at Akal Takht Harmandir Patna Sahib
350th Birth Anniversary
Celebrations



**श्री गुरुगोबिन्द सिंह जी महाराज
की 350वीं प्रकाशापर्व**



**BIHAR
TOURISM**
Blissful Bihar

Contents

2 Editorial: 'Touching History'
By Dr. I J Singh



4 The Meteoric Trail of Banda Singh Bahadar
By Amanpreet Singh Gill



8 Establishing the Sovereign Sikh State
By Professor Parminder Singh



14 The Man and his Immortality
By Professor Ganda Singh

19 Banda Bahadar and The Agrarian Uprising
By Khushwant Singh



20 The Battle of Chhappar Chiri
By Harish Dhillon

24 Ibratnama



25 The Legacy of Banda Singh Bahadar
By Dr. Kirpal Singh

29 The First Sikh Coins
By Jyoti M. Rai



31 The Revolutionary Warrior
By Majid Sheikh

35 The Inspiration
(for India's Struggle for Independence)

36 Banda Bir



37 The Most Wonderful Object in the Whole World
By J S Grewal



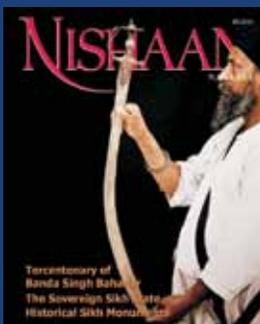
42 Marking the Tercentenary
Martyrdom of Baba Banda Singh Bahadar: 1716-2016



45 Remnants of the Sikh Empire
Review by Monica Arora

46 Selected extracts from the book
Written by Bobby Singh Bansal

63 India-Pakistan Tensions
By Tridivesh Singh Maini



Cover: Bhayee Buta Singh ji with Puratan Shastra at Bhayee Rupa ji village

Managing Editor
Pushpinder Singh

Joint Editor
Bhayee Sikander Singh

Editor for the Americas
Dr. I.J. Singh at New York

Editorial Board
Inni Kaur
Monica Arora

Distributors
Himalayan Books, New Delhi
17 L, Connaught Circus,
New Delhi - 110001

Editorial Office
D-43, Sujan Singh Park
New Delhi 110 003, India
Tel: (91-11) 24617234
Fax: (91-11) 24628615
e-mail : nishaan.nagaara@gmail.com

Published by
The Nagaara Trust
16-A Palam Marg
Vasant Vihar
New Delhi 110 057, India

Associated with
The Chardi Kalaa Foundation
San Jose, USA

Printed by
Colourbar Communications
at G.S. Graphics
Naraina Industrial Area
New Delhi.

Please visit us at:
www.nishaannagaara.com

The opinions expressed in the articles published in the Nishaan Nagaara do not necessarily reflect the views or policy of the Nagaara Trust.

Editorial

1984: Moving Forward

In 1984 I was safe in the US of A, with little awareness of the political shenanigans in India, having come here 24 years earlier. (Add another 32 years now.) The realities of 1984 came from narratives of witnesses and survivors, and from published statistics and reports.

And I have written an essay on the subject pretty much every year since.

In 1949, the India-born Briton Eric Blair writing under the *nom de plume* George Orwell gave the world a fictional but haunting account of a despotic government and its citizenry that had all sense of a free people and society taken out of it. This was the dystopian novel: *Nineteen Eighty-four*.

In 1984 India, arguably the world's largest functioning democracy, turned the fundamentals of a free and democratic government upside down, when it unleashed a reign of terror on a productive religious minority within its domain. Thus, India immortalised that year 1984, an ironic tribute to the prophetic George Orwell.

Sometimes, the boldest and the brightest know not what stupidity drives them. An entire generation of Sikhs and other Indians have come and gone; the memories of 1984 remain, the results, everlasting. It was in June 1984 that the Golden Temple complex (*Harmandir*) at Amritsar was besieged by the Indian Army and hermetically sealed from the rest of the world. Then came the attack and the grievous loss of life, which included thousands of innocent civilians, pilgrims visiting the holy shrine. The iconic Akal Takht as well as the irreplaceable Sikh Reference Library were destroyed, with much collateral damage.

Then, just four months later, in October-November 1984, there was a three-day pogrom against Sikhs in India's capital Delhi and many states around the country, which killed thousands while the police gawked, and the army remained sequestered in their barracks. Despite eleven Commissions of Inquiry and assurances of justice, the Sikh men, women and children killed and maimed continue to haunt public memory till today.

I am not going to revisit the anatomy of the carnage beyond this brief summary. Detailed accounts are widely available; India has spawned, in the interim, a whole new industry of deniers. They exist much as deniers of

the Jewish Holocaust, Armenian Massacre and Rwandan killings do. This is human tragedy not made any easier by denials.

What do thoughtful Indians now say about that 1984, which had brought India to the edge of dismemberment?

That is the theme today that *Nishaan* explores via many voices: Some are of those Sikhs who experienced firsthand the politically engineered attempt at Sikh genocide in 1984. Others are young voices, many are non-Sikhs who raise blunt questions about the body politic of modern India.

Moving forward requires us to engage with the past without fear. Obviously then, the political and social mindset of India's decision-makers must evolve and change. Only when all communities honestly come to terms with what happened can one adopt steps to heal the wounds.

Is there a reset button? Of course, there is.

Think of the Jews who have on their back burner such history, as do the people of South Africa. Indians too have faced much brutality from foreign conquerors over the centuries. More recently, during the partition of 1947, Indians (Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs) faced much atrocities and the wounds have scarcely healed. Who then was responsible? Much has been written on this and will continue to be analysed in the future.

Coming back to 1984, the events, causes and the way forward has to be seriously pondered over. There are books galore and the Internet provides a surfeit of information. Time – over 32 years -- is not a great healer. Justice, immune to facts, has been a handmaiden to wealth, pelf or political power of the guilty and the minorities of India have historically faced a precarious existence in independent India.

Most rulers of today's India appear ignorant or have forgotten the special place that Sikhs have in India's history. Some two-thirds of those imprisoned or hanged by the British during India's struggle for independence were Sikhs. This community has been the backbone of India's armed forces in its several wars since independence. It was the Punjabi farmer (Sikh and Hindu) who produced the Green Revolution, which transformed India from a nation that had yearly famines to one that could feed its ever burgeoning population.

No matter how grave the injustice, a people must come together again or risk fragmentation. Unquestionably, we need to move forward. Amid all this darkness, some light has entered post-1984 when I look at India's defining institutions, which have set some precedence for rest of the world to emulate. These include political institutions as, for instance, when a Sikh, Manmohan Singh served as the Prime Minister, who too was earlier the major figure commanding India's economy, too, was a Sikh. And then there have been two Sikh chiefs of the Indian Army since independence...and lately, a Sikh Chief of the Indian Air Force.

Much has changed in India but just as much remains tied to an unhealthy past. Investigative reports are like the canary that coal miners carry into the mine-shafts with them. The canary warns of unsafe air -- health of the Indian body politic. The canaries have sung their song. Actions must follow.

In the 1990s, Yugoslavia and South Africa, both emerging out of a period of horrendous human rights violations, confronted their past by appointing 'Truth and Reconciliation Commissions.' Without such action a government's credibility is at risk: internally with its own citizens, externally with the international community. We, too, need to preserve history and to shift the focus of human rights in India from rhetoric to the healing power of truth and reconstruction.

How then do we remember 1984 so that it makes a positive difference in the world, to India, and to Sikhs themselves? We either put the past behind us, or become its prisoners. Confession and atonement must precede redemption. These would free sinners as well as those that are sinned against of the inner burden that they carry.

Prime Minister Manmohan Singh took the first step towards this when he offered the nation's regret in Indian parliament; however, atonement and justice still wait. Such actions do not come easy to governments. There is that case of 120,000 Japanese of US citizenship being interned during the Second World War. The government's apology came 50 years later from President Bill Clinton.

Our oral history needs to be preserved, just as the Jews do. I propose a Sikh Research & Documentation Centre affiliated with a credible University. Let us collaborate with museums to establish appropriate exhibits, preserve oral history, recordings, relics, visual artifacts, correspondence, reports and personal recollections. And ensure that such material is available to researchers of any persuasion, even those who deny that such atrocities ever occurred.

For most Indians, '1984' was a mere blip on the stellar record of the world's most populous democracy that happened 32 years ago. Even as India's economy moves forward, old litanies of half-truths and distortions, are not

a measure of progress. The truth is that there were these genocidal killings, notwithstanding lukewarm reports by 11 commissions in three decades! To put all this aside is not a measure of moving forward as these are global realities and in geo-politics, world opinion is ever present.

Surely, India is a credible counterweight to China's growing heft in Asia, even as attempts are underway to keep in check the extremism from rearing its ugly visage. India is ideally suited geographically and strategically to help bring about a voice of sanity.

But to overlook the past injustice meted out to the Sikhs in 1984 is unacceptable. Establishing such a Research & Documentation Centre is a step forward. First we must face, acknowledge, and atone for the past. Then we carry forward the lessons learned.

How to accomplish this agenda? The Indian judiciary cannot be ignored. International human rights organisations must get support, even if progress will come about slowly. Such a Truth & Reconciliation Commission requires truth and honesty, no matter how distasteful and in fact could be liberating in more senses than one. Many nations - Sierra Leone, Argentina, Bolivia, Guatemala, El Salvador, Chile, Timor and Peru, even Sri Lanka - have gone down this path as India needs to as well.

With such a step, undertaken with integrity and sincerity, neither the Indian polity nor the Sikh leadership will emerge unscarred. How best to honour the fallen and heal the living? Remember that *years from now, historians will reconstruct history from what we said and did today*. What you read in the following pages is not and will not be the last word. But, *never ever let the story die*.

We end with this quote from Nilanjan Mukhopadhyay's seminal book on the 'Untold Agony of 1984':

'In the aftermath of the most brutal massacre in post-independent India, it is of little consequence when and how a citizen's initiative was begun. Although largely forgotten on account of its spontaneous nature, civil society's involvement in November 1984 was extraordinary, particularly in the absence of the State. It started simply: a handful of people shocked at the enormity of a tragedy, set in motion India's biggest middle class-led relief and rehabilitation operation since Partition.'

Let *Nishaan* continue to carry forth the flame for justice...

I. J. Singh

Harminder Kaur on “The Need For Closure”



begin by quoting Archbishop Desmond Tutu, the South African Human Rights activist that: "... there is no short cut or simple prescription for healing the wounds and divisions of a society in the aftermath of sustained violence.... It is, however, an essential one to address in the process of building a lasting peace. Examining the painful past, acknowledging it and understanding it..... each society must discover its own route to reconciliation. Reconciliation cannot be imposed from outside, nor can someone else's map get us to our destination: it must be our own solution...."

The victims of 1984 have been advised to forget the past and build their future. For a moment push yourselves in the circumstances of the victims of 1984 to understand if it is possible to forget the past and if that can be a path to reconciliation. Perhaps no! For them there can

be no reconciliation without justice. So let us feel and understand their pain and agony. Let me walk you through some of their stories to understand their craving for a closure and why it has not come in 32 years.

Re-live their journey through their own voices as recorded by Jarnail Singh, 'I Accuse':

"I was bathing my one-year-old son, Ladi, when suddenly a huge crowd turned up. I could only see heads outside. The mob bought kerosene from a nearby shop, dipped sacks in it and set them alight. They threw the burning sacks inside the house. When the house started burning we had no choice but to rush out....a brick thrown by the crowd hit Sardarji on the head and he fell, bleeding profusely. I tied my scarf around his head and took him inside, locking the door. The mob was banging on the door saying bring Sardarji out. I went on to the Veranda and put my three

children in front of them and begged for mercy. They did not have any pity. Then they changed their tune and said almost politely, "you people go to Punjab and we will not do anything." I had no idea then that some of them had climbed onto the roof. I began taking Sardarji outside when one jumped from the roof and hit him with the rod. Blood poured out. I took Sardarji's head in my hands and started begging. But they were beyond listening – they hit him again and again with sticks and Iron rods. I too received a few blows – even today my hand still hurts. The house was set on fire again and I pulled out the children and Sardarji to the street. What could I have done? Our home was burning. None came forward to help, though I begged and begged. The crowd had gathered around and was watching. I was tearing off bits from my dupatta and trying to staunch the wounds.... One of them said, "this bloody woman has not left him since morning. Burn both of them." They were about to light the match when somebody from the nearby Hindu priest's house stepped in and said that they would not allow them to say or do anything to women and children. But it was clear to the mob that they could burn Sardarji. I have no idea if the priest did the right thing or not. Sometimes I feel that it was a good thing that they saved my honour from the mob but sometimes I think that if the mob was listening so much to the priests, then they should have saved Sardarji too. I don't know how Sardarji must have died. I was sobbing when I was pulled away from there. He would have probably survived the pain of his wounds but the rioters had thrown kerosene and white powder over him. The must have burnt him alive." (p.3-4)

Bhagi Kaur was unable to save her honour. In a way it epitomises what happened in 1984. In the morning her husband and ten members of her family had been hacked to death. They came back at night and I quote from Jarnail Singh's book: "The mob mercilessly stripped all women, still in a state of shock and disbelief at the death of their husbands and other family members in the morning... How many times we helpless, dependent ladies were raped by how many men, I can't remember. I had become unconscious....They... kept on satisfying their sexual hunger. The men did not allow any of the women to wear clothes that night...." (p.42)

Gopi her neighbour today added: "not even three dupattas are enough to wipe our tears... nobody was spared neither old women nor little girls. And there was no one they could call for as all the men in that colony had been burnt



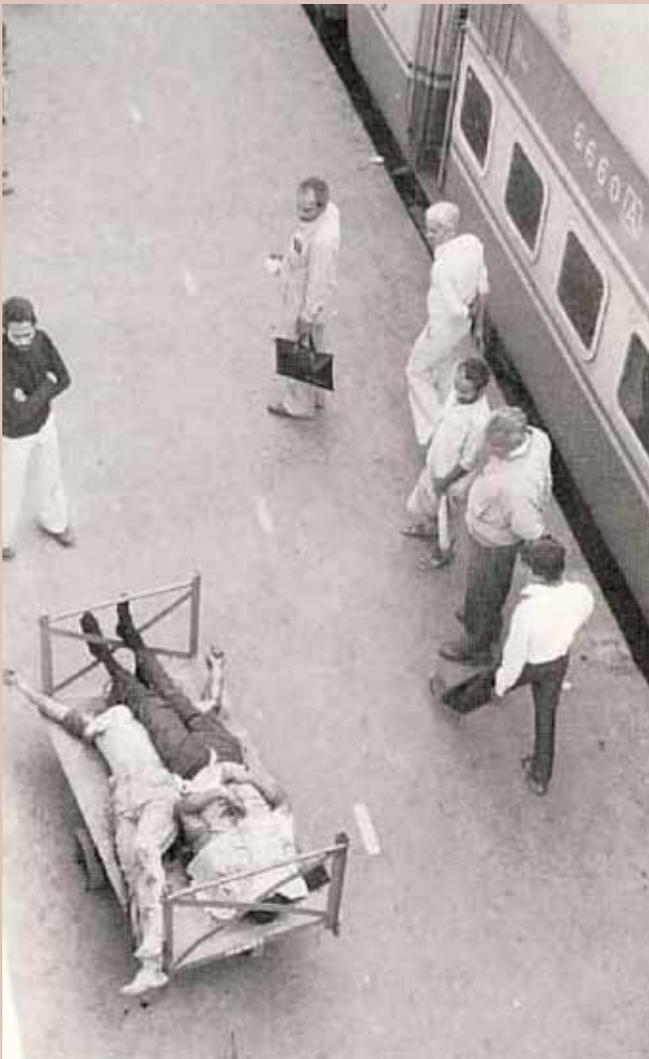
The head office of M/s Uttam Singh Dugal & Co. one of the leading builders of India, set on fire by the mob, 1 November 1984



Office of S Daljit Singh at Regal building, destroyed by the mob. His father Sir Sobha Singh was one of the pioneer builders of New Delhi from 1913

alive that morning – all 500 of them when the women begged to be spared from molestation, their attackers asked them why were they being bashful since they no longer had husbands...." (p.42)

Gopi's Kaur's own husband was killed on November 2 in Sultanpuri by her own neighbour Prem. In the morning he prevented her husband from cutting his hair to save his life. In the morning he told him: "you are my brother there is no need to cut your hair." In the early hours of 2 November a mob came to Prem's house. His brother, also called Gopi, repeatedly "hit my husband with a lathi. A gurkha, Danny chopped off my husband's ears and slashed my husband in the stomach with a khurpi after which they set him on fire. I have seen about 10 persons killed in a similar manner." (Kapoor-Mittal Committee, p.877)



Flashback to 1947 : 37 years later, in 1984 bodies of Sikhs being moved about at Delhi Railway Station

Salt Sprinkled on Raw Wounds

Having been massacred and raped in this brutal fashion within months, salt was sprinkled on raw wounds by a person no less than then Prime Minister of India who justified these killings by saying: "when a big tree falls the earth naturally shakes."

Rs 10,000 was fixed as compensation for snuffing out lives in the most barbaric fashion. These amounts were enhanced later in dribbles.

The frenzy against the Sikhs was whipped over the next two months to get a massive mandate. When the dust had settled over the elections an inquiry was denied into the brutal massacres saying: they would open old wounds. When finally the *Misra Commission of Inquiry* was constituted in May 1985 it proved to be a farce in the name of an inquiry commission belying any hopes of delivering justice. It dubbed the massacres

"a spontaneous reaction" and attributed it to "anti-social elements". While indicting the police it acknowledged that some Congressmen participated in the violence but absolved its leaders of instigating the violence. The Congress (I) used its brute majority in Parliament to prevent public scrutiny of the commission in Parliament.

Since then, no less than ten committees and commissions have been appointed by the central and state governments raising the hope of the victims each time that they will provide legal justice for ruining their lives. Some committees and commissions indicted the police and members of the Congress party and clearly named Sajjan Kumar, Jagdish Tytler and Kamal Nath for having instigated the massacres but legal justice is yet to be delivered.

For the death of 2733 persons in Delhi alone less than one per cent were convicted. Only 587 FIRs were registered and 247 cases were closed as "untraced."

The agony of the victims of 1984 did not end with their personal traumas. They have continued into the next generation. While the first generation got killed the second suffered the consequences of that violence and this is how their story unfolded in subsequent years.

Working mothers

Women who had never stepped out of their homes had to become working mothers to raise their families. Their sudden entry into the workforce had profound impact on the lives of their children. Owing to the absence of mothers from the household and a male guiding force from their lives, many children inevitably turned wayward. Many widows recount that their children were bullied and taunted at school - they were called "fatherless" or "children without daddys". Teachers treated them "differently." Shanti Kaur, now in her sixties said that they dropped out of school. Regular exposure to hurt, humiliation and social isolation made them sink into a world of their own. They were filled with loneliness, depression and sadness. Children had trouble with eating and sleeping. They were simply unable to cope with life.

A few widows complained that some of their boys had taken to gambling and pick-pocketing. Shanti Kaur who was expecting her sixth child in 1984 said "my son dropped out of school in the ninth standard. He was a good student but he has now become a thief. When mothers work, this is what happens." Another widow added: "what can we do alone? We can either stay at home or go to work."

Hesitant to talk at first many children revealed that their biggest wound was the loss of their father. Many of them have only hazy memories of the carnage 32 years ago. Some of them were too small to even understand what was happening. But over the years, they have heard tales of those terrible days and their world view remains shaped by that.

More than 50 young men, victims of the consequences of the massacres, have lost their lives to drugs while alcoholism is rampant among the second generation survivors. Thus the second generation has simply collapsed while their widowed mothers have watched that happen helplessly. When the widows of 1984 see an extension of their own tragedy in their children their life gets frozen in the past leaving little hope of a closure.

Different things

Closure can mean different things to different people. For some an apology is a critical first step, while for others it may be compensation, it can mean a constellation of feelings for many others – peace, relief, a sense of justice, the ability to move on—that which can only come with a finality. That finality is legal justice.

It is a universally accepted principle that Justice and Reconciliation are fundamentally significant goals that need to be addressed for long term peace building in the aftermath of a massacre.

The victims and children of 1984 massacres have grown up as alienated citizens of society, bitter and angry. They have put their lives on hold as legal processes have

dragged on. The hope that legal justice will open the door to some solace to go on with the rest of their lives seems a far cry. If you want them to feel as citizens of this country the need for truth and justice today remains as urgent as ever before.

Fundamental Rights

Legal justice is the fundamental right of the victims of 1984. To deliver that justice to them is no favour. But as they stand at a crossroads today bitter and angry it also becomes a bounden duty of the civil society to help them by bringing pressure upon this government to provide them a closure. They have lived a scarred life far too long and it continues to haunt them.

The closure could have come to the widows of 1984 violence and their families in 2005 when for the first time there was a public acknowledgement of the massacres from the Indian State. When Prime Minister Manmohan Singh (a Sikh himself) apologised in Parliament and said: "On behalf of our government, on behalf of the entire people of this country, I bow my head in shame that such a thing took place." Even though the apology came after 21 years of the brutal massacres of 1984 there was a possibility of providing them a closure. But neither was there any admission of state culpability nor was the apology followed by legal justice to the survivors. Thus denying them a closure once again.

The SIT set-up by the BJP government in February 2015 once again raised hopes that a closure will finally be provided. It was mandated to re-examine evidence in cases which had been closed and even re-open cases



Gursharan Singh and his mother Kulwant Kaur owned a home and shop and were doing "quite well" before the 1984 carnage. Today, Kulwant lives alone at Sardar Colony and the mother works as a teacher at Sri Guru Angad Dev Kendra, Rohini



Padam Singh, 80, belonging to an ironsmiths' family, lives today with his daughter Parvati Kaur. On 1 November 1984, his house in Sultan Puri was looted and then set on fire



The third generation: young Ajit Singh and Ranjit Singh's grandfather, Ishwar Singh and chacha Naval Singh, were brutally murdered and their house was torched in 1984. Both the boys study at Nishkam Bhawan Tuition Centre at Tilak Nagar in Delhi



The first generation: recollecting the 1984 massacre

and file charge sheets in the courts concerned. The SIT was given six months to complete its work, including filing of charge sheets in nearly three-decade old cases. In the last year and a half it has failed to call a single witness. The victims of 1984 feel that this too will be a wasteful opportunity.

The first generation of witnesses are in their sixties. In another decade they would perhaps not be around or will not be able-bodied to pursue the long winding legal processes. So it is the responsibility of India's civil society to bring pressure upon the government to help



Kulwant Kaur, teacher in-charge at Sri Guru Angad Dev Kendra at Rohini imparts knowledge on the shabad-kirtan to girls from families of the victims of the 1984 pogrom

the victims of 1984 have a closure to the tragedies in their lives and have that closure while they are still alive so that they can fade away in peace.

For 32 years they are all living in a kind of hell, and are all seeking the elusive state they call "closure" to help them go on with their lives. Not that they seek

to forget, or to stop grieving, but for the last 32 years they are frozen in a nightmarish, unbearable moment and must find a closure by punishing the guilty of 1984 that will help them find a way to get beyond it, to achieve some respite from the images that continue haunt them.



'The Circle of Politics'

In his book *Sikhs: The Untold Agony of 1984*, Nilanjan Mukhopadhyay recalls the horrifying pogrom of October-November 1984 following the assassination of then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. 2,733 Sikh men, women and children were mercilessly “killed, burnt and exterminated” in the heart of India's capital New Delhi and several hundreds were massacred in other parts of the country. The personal histories narrated poignantly by the author were collected over a period of two years of excruciating research and highlight the virtual apathy of subsequent governments towards Sikhs.

Reproduced is the penultimate chapter from the book :



Iconic picture of refugees, mostly Muslims, heading to Purana Quila, the Old Fort in Delhi for safety during the 1947 riots

It is sad when a nation celebrating freedom from imperial forces, readies itself to lament with equal vigour in its immediate aftermath. By end-August 1947, Delhi had become a transit port for approximately 1,30,000 refugees—Hindus and Sikhs who had escaped from Pakistan and Muslims who were queuing up to leave India for the “Promised Land”. Initially, Delhi’s population of 9,50,000

had shown a considerable decrease due to the mass exodus of 3,33,000 Muslims to Jinnah’s land, but it was soon evened out with the arrival of 5,00,000 non-Muslim refugees into the city.

The capital registered its highest decadal growth between 1941-51; Delhi changed, evidenced even in seemingly insignificant alterations. For instance, Qarol Bagh, a bustling



1947: Indian Army tank on patrol in New Delhi's posh Connaught Place

commercial and residential area beyond the western fringe of the posh Connaught Place, became Karol Bagh—the change in spelling necessitated by a phonetic difference in Urdu and Hindi. This was just one of the signs of how this predominantly Indo-Islamic city was metamorphosing into a Punjabi town.

Nearly forty years later, Delhi was forced to change its character yet again after being overrun by the anti-Sikh pogrom, which was followed by a wave of migrants from Uttar Pradesh and Bihar.

What was once the citadel of imperial pomp was reduced to a desolate meeting ground for refugees from Pakistan and Muslims from villages, towns and cities of north India. In Delhi, large number of Muslims abandoned their homes in several localities and joined communities like the Meos, Momins and Mapillas in Purana Qila, Humayun's Tomb, Jamia Millia Islamia, sundry *qabristans* (graveyards) and even sought shelter in residences of eminent leaders of the community including Maulana Abul Kalam Azad and Rafi Ahmed Kidwai. In an atmosphere of fear and uncertainty, individual identities became irrelevant and they huddled together as a monolithic block of Muslim refugees, hoping for some information from the Pak Transfer Office in 'L' Block, Connaught Place.

In retrospect, the situation in 1947 was a precursor to 1984 as displaced Sikhs and Hindus from across the border took refuge

in swathes of wasteland, in hastily-built tenements close to the New Delhi railway station, at Kingsway (the word Camp was suffixed to the locality thereafter), the fourteenth-century fort in Tughlaqabad and the foregrounds of the Lal Qila or Red Fort etc. In a deluge myth-like situation, the resilience to cope with emotional distress was severely challenged. Well-known author Krishna Sobti, herself a settler, recalled a particular gent arriving from across the border with his life's possession in a satchel and refusing to utter a word for two days. On 15 August 1947, when trays laden with sweets were passed around in Delhi, the refugees slunk away, said Krishna Sobti: they had no reasons to rejoice.

Neither did the administration of Delhi which was faced with a catastrophe and crumbled under the weight of the additional burden. The Central Refugees Relief Committee had a mammoth task on hand but in a first instance of its kind, ordinary citizens were mobilised by three women: Sucheta Kripalani, Sushila Nayar and Subhadra Joshi who set up the first volunteer force to assist refugees and riot victims. Yet another woman who stood out for her remarkable work during the period was Begum Anees Kidwai, whose husband (the younger brother of Rafi Ahmed Kidwai) was killed in Mussoorie during the riots. At the bidding of the Mahatma, Begum Kidwai worked relentlessly in refugee camps convincing Muslims to stay back in India.

Despite a hiatus of four decades in the history of communal riots in post-Independent Delhi, the engagement of citizens groups in the aftermath of the anti-Sikh pogrom was not without a precedent. In more ways than one, the inception of the *Nagrik Ekta Manch* or NEM, post the 1984 riots had its genesis in 1947. Even as Sucheta Kripalani, Subhadra Joshi and Sushila Nayar went about the rehabilitation work in camps, politically motivated groups like the Hindu Sahitya Samiti, Hindu Mahasabha and Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee propped up Hindu settlers into the abandoned homes of Muslims and drove out families that had stayed back. By now Delhi was a tinderbox waiting to go up in flames.



Dr Zakir Hussain

The several uncanny and unfortunate similarities between 1947 and 1984 notwithstanding, a significant factor in a newly independent India was the presence of a man called Mahatma Gandhi. In early January 1948, he embarked on what was destined to be his last fast unto death, to awaken the “inner voice of Indians” and stop the communal mayhem in Delhi. The Mahatma was particularly distressed that Dr Zakir Hussain (who later became India’s third President and was Vice Chancellor of Jamia Millia Islamia) feared for his life and felt constrained in Delhi’s vicious atmosphere. In a strange coincidence,



Giani Zail Singh

two prominent Sikhs in 1984—the Indian President, Giani Zail Singh and iconic writer, scholar and journalist, Khushwant Singh—were forced to be fugitives in Delhi, one in Rashtrapati Bhawan and the other at a diplomat’s residence.

Gandhi’s assassination on 30 January 1948 jolted the nation’s conscience and halted



Khushwant Singh

the mindless violence that swept through the streets of Delhi for several months. But the city never regained its original character despite the fact that while large-scale immigration of Muslims continued, almost 1,00,000 were held back on the promise of a secular state. Yet, the change in Delhi’s demographic map was soon evident: from 33.2 per cent of the city’s population in 1941, Muslims in 1951 accounted for a meagre 5.7 per cent, and were mainly concentrated in the northern, central and north-eastern parts of the city. In the next decade however, the two predominant minority communities of Muslims and Sikhs accounted for 13.6 per cent of the city’s population and their numbers kept rising steadily at every subsequent headcount in 1961, 1971, 1981, 1991 and 2001 (figures for 2011 were yet to be released at the time of writing this book). Yet, Gandhi’s promise of a secular polity was turned into a farce because not a single political party took the onus of ensuring a parliamentary representation for Delhi’s religious minorities.

By the time the first general elections were held in 1951-52, social identity, encompassing religion and caste had become imperative for the electoral strategies of every political party. Several Muslims who had stayed back in Delhi altered their physical appearance, reminiscent of Sikhs changing their identities after November 1984. Although the Congress was ostensibly opposed to the pursuance of communal politics, the party fielded Muslim candidates from constituencies that had a sizeable number from the community. For instance, the then Minister of Education and a stalwart of the freedom movement, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad was fielded from Rampur in Uttar Pradesh. In Delhi, the situation was far worse, and in what seemed like an “election-paranoia”, none of the political parties fielded a single Muslim candidate from the four seats.

Finally after three decades, Sikandar Bakht became the first Muslim from Delhi to enter the Lok Sabha in 1977 as a Janata Party nominee. His political career was however riddled with ironies. Bakht was initiated into politics by Subhadra



Sanjay Gandhi

her protégé broke ranks and joined the rebels' Congress (O). For the one-time pupil, the injustices of Emergency in 1975, particularly Sanjay Gandhi's forced sterilisation of Muslim men, proved to be extremely potent campaign material and he vanquished Subhadra Joshi in a one-sided election in which the Muslims voted en bloc for the Janata Party.

In a complete volte face, Sikander Bakht joined the Bharatiya Janata Party or BJP in 1980 and was faced with a vicious campaign from his own party men after they raked up a curious detail about his personal life (the *Organiser* magazine, the official RSS mouthpiece had railed against him for marrying a Hindu girl in 1952). Sikandar Bakht never made it to the Lok Sabha after 1977 and by 1985 all the major political parties discontinued the occasional practise of nominating Muslim candidates in the capital.



Charanjit Singh

The Sikhs were treated no differently either. Charanjit Singh (owner of *Pure Drinks*, a company set up by his father, Mohan Singh) was the first Sikh in Delhi to be fielded by the Congress party in 1977 but lost the elections owing to the wave of

resentment against his leader and Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi for the atrocities during the Emergency in 1975-76.

Charanjit Singh was fabulously wealthy and entered politics on the strength of his financial clout as the franchise holder of Coca Cola. Khushwant Singh in *Truth, Love and a Little Malice: An Autobiography* wrote that unlike his father, Charanjit Singh harboured strong political ambitions and his largesse earned him the presidentship of the New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC) as he had 'befriended Mrs Gandhi and her family. He provided them with cars and cash whenever and whatever purpose they needed it.' Three years later, in 1980, on the recommendation of Indira Gandhi, Charanjit Singh was once again nominated as the Congress party's candidate for the Lok Sabha polls. Although he won the elections the second time over, he was still a long way off from winning the hearts of his community as their political representative in Delhi.

By 1984, although Charanjit Singh was an influential member of the Lok Sabha, and part of the inner coterie of Delhi's political circle, it did not insulate him from the violence in the aftermath of Indira Gandhi's assassination—three of his Campa Cola bottling plants were wrecked by mobs, an act which Khushwant Singh implied was due to the involvement of a "rival manufacturer of soft drinks". Thereafter, it was a long haul for him, initially in securing licenses to replace damaged or destroyed machinery and later in overcoming the "technical objections" raised by the Customs Department. Charanjit Singh was routinely harassed by a hostile bureaucracy in whose mind, an affluent Sikh had "got away" easy. It was during this phase of vilification that he found acceptance amongst Delhi's Sikhs who interpreted every affront towards an eminent Sikh as an insult to the community. Finally, when he was denied a party nomination by the Rajiv-led Congress party and excluded from the cabal of the political elite, the Sikh community accepted him as their own.

Charanjit Singh was the last Sikh to be fielded by a political party until Dr Manmohan Singh who lost as a Congress nominee from South Delhi in 1999. It took another fifteen years before Jarnail Singh (who gained notoriety for throwing a shoe at ex-Home Minister, P Chidambaram) was nominated by the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) from west Delhi in 2014, and lost the elections in the wake of a Modi wave in the country.

Prior to 1984, political involvement amongst Delhi's Sikhs was restricted to Sikh shrines or gurudwaras. It gave them power and there was pelf to be had as the Delhi Sikh Gurudwara Management Committee or DSGMC managed ten gurudwaras, thirty-nine educational institutions including schools, colleges, and technical institutes, besides running three hospitals. The control of Delhi's gurudwaras was first vested with the community by the British under an archaic Act of 1914, which was replaced in 1925 by a law which mandated the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) in

Amritsar to take charge of all the gurudwaras in the country and since then, Sikh shrines in the capital remained under its control for almost five decades till 1971.

its first tenure, when the polls were held in 1979, the Akali Dal had split and Punjab was reeling under militancy. Indira



Gurdwara Rakabganj Sahib

When the Empire shifted its capital from Calcutta to Delhi and began the process of constructing New Delhi around the Raisina Hills, it illegally encroached on land belonging to Gurdwara Rakabganj, a shrine of great historical significance. The matter was settled amicably after the British withdrew their claim but resurfaced in 1960 when the Delhi administration wanted control over the plot of land. The Sikhs erupted in anger and the agitation catapulted Jathedar Santokh Singh as an important leader of the community in Delhi.

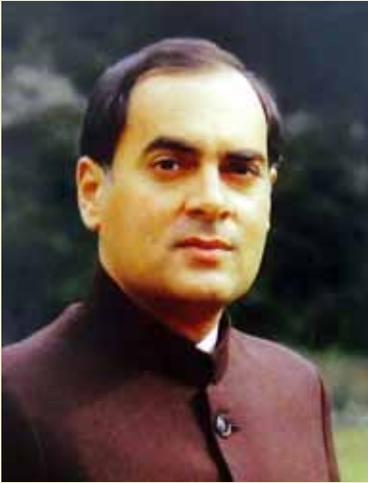
A decade later in 1971, it was the turn of a one-time Akali Dal Lok Sabha member from Sangrur, Bibi Nirlep Kaur who along with a group of miscreants attempted to wrest control of Delhi's gurudwaras, which resulted in violent clashes amongst Sikhs. The incident led to the enactment of the Delhi Sikh Gurudwara Management Act in 1971 with a specific intent to protect the shrines in the capital. Under the new law, members of the Delhi Sikh Gurudwara Management Committee were to be elected by Delhi's Sikhs and the Congress sensing an opportunity to gain control of the gurudwaras began its backroom parleys. However by the mid-1970s, the political situation in Delhi was inexorably linked to that of Punjab and the Akalis held complete sway over the DSGMC.

The first elections for the DSGMC was held in 1975 and won predictably by the Akalis. Five years later, at the end of



Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale

Gandhi recognised a renewed opportunity and influenced the Centre to issue an Ordinance that no longer made it mandatory for a person seeking election as DSGMC President to be a matriculate, a high school graduate or even a Giani (a Sikh who is well versed in the scriptures). This paved the way for Santokh Singh to become president almost as a reward for .having set up two crucial and secret meetings between Indira Gandhi and Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale. It may be recalled that after Jathedar Santokh Singh's assassination in 1981,



Rajiv Gandhi

Delhi's gurudwara politics was pushed deeper into the Punjab cauldron. Santokh Singh's pre-eminence in leveraging the Punjab issue for Indira Gandhi was evident in an incident mentioned by the noted forensic expert and one-time director of the 'All India Institute of Medical Sciences', Dr T D Dogra. In a blog posted in May 2011, he claimed that

Indira Gandhi had appeared "visibly disturbed" when she came enquiring about the Jathedar's autopsy in the hospital. Although the Prime Minister kept away from the funeral rights, she was well represented by Rajiv Gandhi and two Cabinet ministers, Zail Singh and Buta Singh. But what was significant was the attendance of Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale, at the Bhog ceremony of the slain leader.



1984: Four decades after partition, as Delhi was engulfed by massacres the, police was deployed my half-heartedly

After November 1984, Charanjit Singh was replaced in Delhi by Lalit Maken who was listed as one of the main perpetrators of the anti-Sikh riots.

The Congress meanwhile followed a bizarre policy of distributing tickets to "tainted" MPs—while Sajjan Kumar and Dharam Das Shastri, MPs from Outer Delhi and Karol Bagh were dropped from the list, HKL Bhagat and Jagdish Tytler were re-nominated from East Delhi and Delhi Sadar respectively. In retrospect, Charanjit Singh was the only Congress leader whose political career ended rather

prematurely, just as his life had in 1991. After 1984, an eleven-year freeze was imposed on the DSGMC elections and with that Delhi's Sikh politicians felt completely marginalised and distanced from the Congress party.

However, there was one man who played the game according to rules set by the Congress party and beat them to it – a small-time leader called Balwinder Singh, who had filed an affidavit in the Misra Commission in support of H K L Bhagat in 1986. The Commission took note of it and after citing it along with other pro-Bhagat testimonials, it exonerated the MP of all charges. Three years later, in the run-up to the parliamentary polls in 1989, Bhagat was presented with a *saropa* (a scarf or a length of cloth; a mark of honour in the Sikh tradition) by Balwinder Singh which later held him in good stead. In the Delhi assembly elections held in 1993, he was nominated by the Congress party to contest from the prestigious Krishna Nagar seat but lost to BJP's Harsh Vardhan.

In comparison to Balwinder Singh's political career which was cut short abruptly, his son had a successful run with the Congress party in Delhi. In May 2014, shortly after the party's electoral debacle in the parliamentary elections, Arvinder Singh Lovely (previously a minister in Sheila Dikshit's government)

became the first Sikh to be appointed as president of the Delhi Pradesh Congress Committee (DPCC). Given his father's engagement with leaders accused of complicity in the anti-Sikh pogrom, it came as no surprise when the state Congress unit under Lovely's leadership chose Jagdish Tytler and Sajjan Kumar to campaign for the assembly polls in February 2015. Later when the Congress high command appointed Ajay Maken as the chief of the campaign committee, Lovely took umbrage and refused to contest the elections. However, he remained at the helm of the party's state unit until the election verdict after which Ajay Maken took over as president of the DPCC.

Lovely's political trajectory raises a question that has been addressed several times over in this book, albeit in different contexts: why do people exhibit different behavioural patterns despite undergoing the same experience? Why did a man (who was barely sixteen in 1984) choose to align with leaders accused

of instigating rioters while others either ploughed for justice or remained confined to politics within the DSGMC?

Before attempting to comprehend the above-mentioned conundrum, it would be worthwhile to examine the political choices made by Sikhs in Delhi and Punjab in the aftermath of the 1984 riots. In the first Lok Sabha elections held after November 1984, the Congress polled 49.1 per cent votes nationally, while in Delhi it secured an overwhelming 68.7 per cent and won in all the seven seats. The two significant factors for the Congress party's victory in the capital were firstly, the

high voter turnout which at one point was even higher than the average national figure and second, religious polarisation precipitated by a high-pitched electoral campaign. Although there is no empirical data to determine how the Sikhs had voted in these elections—whether or not they cast their lot with non-Congress parties but it probably does not require great political insight to infer that they did not vote for the Congress in overwhelming numbers.

The first clear indication of an anti-Congress sentiment amongst Sikh voters was discernible during the Punjab assembly elections in September 1985. Despite the tragic circumstances of the preceding year, compounded by the shrill call for a poll boycott by terrorist groups, and the assassination of Sant Harchand Singh Longowal, Punjab turned up in full strength and registered a high turn out at 68.2 per cent. The Akali Dal secured a clear majority by winning 73 of the 117 seats, with a vote share of 38 per cent. Although at 37.9 per cent, the Congress was just a whisker away in terms of the overall vote share, yet it managed only 32 seats. The BJP contested on its own after severing an eighteen-year-old alliance with the Akalis and in the process managed to win only 6 seats.

The miniscule difference in the vote share between the Akalis and Congress was because the former had chosen to contest in fewer seats and its victory was primarily because of the 44 per cent of votes that it had obtained in seats contested. In contrast, the Congress stood at 37.9 per cent—a difference of more than six per cent and sufficient to justify the difference of 41 seats in the final tally.

The reason for Akali Dal's brilliant performance in the 1985 polls was obviously predicated on the support it had from the state's Sikhs who accounted for 60.8 per cent, whereas the Hindus added up to 36.9 per cent of the population. Since it can be safely presumed that the Akali Dal virtually drew a blank with the Hindus, it was 75 per cent of the Sikh vote which propelled the Dal to the top.

However things were on the mend from the mid-1990s after the Congress-ruled Centre initiated two major steps: the DSGMC elections in 1995 and the Punjab polls a year later, in 1996. For the Sikhs of Delhi, the resumption of gurudwara elections meant the Centre's acquiescence of the community's fundamental right to manage its religious institutions.

The historic 1995 elections were however swept by Akali Dal's Paramjit Singh Sarna who became president of the DSGMC, but after the Akali Dal split up in Punjab in the same year, Sarna formed a local breakaway unit in the capital called the Akali Dal (Delhi) by aligning with the Congress and remained at the helm of affairs for more than a decade till January 2013. Although the Congress had regained control over the capital's gurudwaras unscrupulously, it had the community's support which by now had altered its anti-Congress stance. The noted

psephologist Sanjay Kumar in his book, *Changing Electoral Politics in Delhi: From Caste to Class*, observed that it is 'one of the popular misconceptions,' that the BJP is 'the first choice of Sikh voters.' He argued that although this may have been true for the 1984 elections, the situation began altering from 1993 onwards in the 1998 assembly elections, the Congress had the support of 49.5 per cent of Sikhs as against 37.4 per cent who sided with the BJP.

According to surveys conducted by the Centre for Studies in Developing Societies (CSDS), there was a significant rise in Sikh support for the Congress between the Lok Sabha polls in 2004 and the state assembly elections in 2008. From 32.3 per cent in 2004, it increased to 41.7 per cent in 2008 and rose dramatically in the 2009 parliamentary polls when the Congress registered an all-time high of 57.7 per cent vote share amongst the community.

It is worthwhile to note here that the period after 2004 coincided with two significant events, the first was the official release of the Nanavati Commission report and second, a public apology for 1984 from a Sikh who also happened to be the Prime Minister of a Congress-led government at the Centre. Although in the 2013 assembly elections, the Congress party's vote share dipped to 23.3 per cent and to 9.7 per cent during the historic 2014 parliamentary elections, the figures were indicative of Sikhs' voting behaviour mirroring the national sentiment. This was further bolstered during the 2015 assembly polls when both the BJP and Congress were vanquished by a fledgeling Aam Aadmi Party.



Manjit Singh GK

After the Sikhs in Delhi drifted away from the Congress party in 2010, the Akali Dal won the DSGMC elections in 2013 and elected Manjit Singh GK as its president. As the son of Jathedar Santokh Singh, the man had interesting legacy. Manjit Singh GK was only twenty-three when his father was gunned down in 1981 and after cutting his teeth in several political parties, he finally made Akali Dal his home base.

Sikh politicians in Delhi can be typecast into three main prototypes. The first include men like Manjit Singh G K and Paramjit Singh Sarna who are part of the political elite and



Manjinder Singh Sirsa

possess both economic and social clout. This group also includes new entrants like Manjinder Singh Sirsa who steamrolled his way to the top on the basis of his fabulous wealth and was elected the secretary of DSGMC in 2013, despite the fact that neither he nor his family were in

Delhi during the 1984 carnage. In fact, the family acquired its surname, “Sirsa” from a district in Haryana bordering Punjab which was their home till two decades ago. As a child growing up in the Eighties, Manjinder was witness to his father’s great ability in cultivating friends amongst local Congress leaders; Bhoopinder Singh Hooda, the former chief minister of Haryana, was apparently a frequent visitor to their home.



Harsimrat Kaur Badal

The father-son duo shifted to Delhi in 1995 and after realising the futility of rallying around Sikh leaders within the Congress, they hitched their wagon to the Akali Dal. Manjinder Singh entered the lucrative real estate business and became particularly close to Bikram Singh Majithia, who is the brother-in-law of Punjab’s Deputy Chief Minister Sukhbir Singh Badal and younger brother of Union Minister for Food Processing, Harsimrat Kaur Badal. Soon, the gamble paid off and Sirsa was nominated as president of the Youth Akali Dal in Delhi. He fought the Delhi assembly elections as an Akali Dal candidate, first in 2008 which he lost but regained ground by winning it five years later in 2013. His uncanny ability to manoeuvre through political minefields was first evident in 2007 when he was elected as municipal councillor from west Delhi’s Rajouri Garden. But in 2012, when the seat was reserved for women candidates mandated by an electoral fiat, the Sirsa family fielded Manjinder’s wife, Satwinder Kaur Sirsa as a proxy candidate. The Sirsa couple jointly owned assets worth seventy crores including four luxury cars in 2012, and by 2013 their wealth rose by almost 500 per cent from Rs



Jarnail Singh

43.36 crores to 235.51 crores !

In February 2015, Sirsa was pitted against Jarnail Singh, a Sikh leader who represents the second prototype and owes his

political career to the shameful incident of shoe-chucking at ex-Union Home Minister, P Chidambaram. It may be recalled that far from being part of the elite circle, he belonged to an economically backward class whose political consciousness was shaped by the November 1984 pogrom. He along with Jagdeep Singh and (a different) Jarnail Singh, have introduced a new dimension to Delhi’s Sikh politicians as people who have firsthand and traumatic linkages to the riots but chose to join the Aam Aadmi Party which despite all its shortcomings is neither based on religious identity like the Akali Dal nor ambivalent like the Congress party about delivering justice for the victims of 1984.

The former Congress state president, Arvinder Singh Lovely



Arvinder Singh Lovely

shores up the third corner of the triangle— son of a junior Congress worker, his relentless work amongst his community to repose trust in the Congress party catapulted him into the political limelight. In 2003,

Lovely was accused by the then home minister of Gujarat (now President of the BJP), Amit Shah for his involvement in a sex scandal while he was camping in Ahmedabad with two ministers from Punjab. Initially, Lovely had threatened to file a defamation case against Shah but eventually agreed to an out-of-court settlement. At a time when other Sikh politicians were strategising to present the best case before the Nanavati Commission, Lovely was embroiled in a sleazy controversy. But it neither deterred him nor impacted his rise in the Congress party.

Traditionally, although Sikh politicians in Delhi were denied pivotal positions both by the Congress and the BJP, Lovely succeeded in wrangling a ministership from the ex-Chief Minister of Delhi, Sheila Dikshit. Yet as the events in 2015 amply demonstrated, his position in the Congress is tenuous and largely dependent on the decisions taken by his party’s high command. For Delhi’s Sikh leaders, it is a perennial choice between the devil and the deep sea while the Congress adopted the theory of co-opting them to their advantage, the BJP opted for the outsourcing model and left the Sikhs at the mercy of the Akali Dal.



Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi seen with Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal

So far as the Aam Aadmi Party and Delhi's Sikhs are concerned, despite the internal squabbles and severe challenges of governance, there is no gainsaying the fact that it is perhaps the only political outfit which provided ordinary Sikhs with a platform to look beyond their religious identities. For instance, although the two Jarnail Singhs and Jagdeep Singh contested from constituencies that have a significant presence from their community, they were not merely known as "Sikh leaders" in the way Asaduddin Owasi of the Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen or several like him, are for the Muslims. In more ways than one, the future of Delhi's Sikhs will depend on how far the AAP succeeds in treating the community with dignity that has been denied to them for over three decades.

The AAP Alternate

The crowd surged towards plastic chairs to sit under the arc lights. Several jostled and craned their necks for a better view. No one was complaining nor distracted by the Jimmy Jibs swinging wildly to catch the ecstasy in the air. Hundreds had gathered atop the terrace of Delhi's underground Palika Parking in the iconic Connaught Place or Rajiv Gandhi Chowk for a TV show in February 2015. The excitement was not over those who sat on the open proscenium but about exit polls which predicted a clear majority for the fledgling Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) in Delhi elections.

Raising his voice above the din, the Bharatiya Janata Party leader flailed his arms and accused the news channel of packing the audience with AAP supporters. They booed in response. When the leader protested, they show's anchor turned to the audience and asked who amongst them was a BJP supporter? A few hands went up in an instant; but the ones in support of AAP altered the skyline. It was so different a couple of months ago, I thought watching the jubilation from the stage where I sat as a commentator.

Someone in the audience grabbed the mike and spoke in a staccato manner about the "undelivered" promises made by the Narendra Modi government; a few others took the cue and shouted in support of Arvind Kejriwal and his team. It wasn't long before a middle-aged Sikh in his forties caught the anchor's eye. His anonymity was of little consequence; his identity sufficed. He was agitated and did not share the enthusiasm of the exit poll results. Moreover, no one was in the mood for a lament but when he persevered, the crowd fell silent.

'I just want to ask Kejriwal if Sikhs will get justice? Will he seriously pursue his promise of punishing the perpetrators of 1984?'

Thereafter he spoke continuously about the countless tragedies borne by Sikhs, the horror stories witnessed by several families—directly or obliquely. Sikhs, he said had cried themselves hoarse seeking redressal.

Several in the audience were astounded. After all, the crowds were in a celebratory mood; no one wanted to revisit unpleasant episodes which seemed passe that evening. But the Sikh was relentless and goaded the people to take a position. Soon the audience joined in the chorus shouting, "Punish the guilty!"

But it was easier said than done.

On 12 February 2015, forty-eight hours after the most humiliating electoral defeat of his career, the Narendra Modi-led Centre ordered the formation of a Special Investigation Team (SIT) to probe the 1984 anti-Sikh riots. (The SIT was mandated to submit the report within six months of its formation). Two months prior on 29 December 2014, a little before the Delhi assembly elections were notified and the Model Code of Conduct had come into force, the government enhanced the compensation for Sikhs by Rs 5,00,000.

Strangely, the announcements failed to evoke any euphoria amongst Delhi's Sikhs. The community had witnessed the formation of the Nanavati Commission fifteen years ago and had its hopes dashed after subsequent governments failed to press for trials following the publication of the report. The only consolation had been Dr Manmohan Singh's public admission of remorse and with that it had been curtains so far as any official action was concerned.

But, after the Congress party's rout in the November 2013 assembly polls in Delhi, there was a raucous demand seeking justice for the victims of 1984 survivors yet again. In retrospect, the AAP government in its first forty-nine-day stint may have accomplished little except earning the moniker of fugitives, but it had recommended the formation of an SIT to probe the anti-Sikh riots. When the tide turned against Narendra Modi



Candlelight march in November 2016

in 2015, his government made a belated attempt to regain Sikh support and swiftly acted on AAP's initiatives. For several cynics, this sounded like the oft-repeated cliché—the path to justice is slow and tedious; there are several pitfalls to be crossed etc but there is a significant difference in the current political narrative of the capital—the presence of two rival political parties who are bitterly opposed to the Congress, probably the only party that has reasons to prevent prosecutions. If the other two players, BJP and AAP hamper the wheels of justice, it will be at their own political peril.

Whether they suffered grave personal losses or escaped due to divine providence, almost every Sikh family kept the memories of 1984 alive by passing it on to the next generation. Even after three decades of the horrendous episode, there is intense grieving for those who died on the streets with tyres around their necks or were hunted down and trapped to be murdered. The eerie rants of murderer mobs are evoked each time there

is a passing reference, an accurate recollection of the hysteria every time the nation mourns the death of a prime minister.

Although a commentator is generally expected to be non partisan during a TV debate, I was tempted to shout across to the Sikh man that unfortunately, there can never be a closure for the dead of 1984 and the closest one can get is by hoping for fair justice, which has so far remained elusive. In the countless interviews I conducted during the writing of this book, I was invariably asked to pass on an appeal to the government in power: recognise the enormity of the crime and seek atonement by beginning a fair trial against the accused.

While I was writing the last few words of this book, Salil Tripathi's *The Colonel Who Would Not Repent: The Bangladesh War and its Unquiet Legacy* landed on my desk for a review. A poem that he saw inscribed on the wall of Jalladkhana Memorial in Mirpur, Dhaka—a mass grave during the war, has a similar affirmation albeit in a different context:

*Saakkhi Banglar rokto bheja mati
Saakkhi akasher chondro tara
Bhuli Nai shohider kono smriti
Bhulbo na kichhui amra*

'The blood-stained soil of Bengal is our witness
So is the sky and so are the moon and stars
We haven't forgotten the memories of martyrs
We will not forget anything'

Sadly, the ones who died in Delhi and elsewhere were no martyrs. Moreover, they did not die fighting a battle that was theirs.



The Sikh Forum convened on 1 November 2016 to commemorate the 32nd Anniversary of the 1984 pogrom: what is the way forward ?

THE UNTOLD AGONY

Book Review by Archis Mohan



SIKHS

The Untold Agony of 1984

NILANJAN MUKHOPADHYAY

A must read for every reader who desires for a nation to
never repeat the horrific events of 1984...

—Mahesh Bhatt

Every day hundreds of Indians from remote corners of India queue up to offer their respects at this bungalow that houses that memorial to former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi on 1, Safdarjung Road in Lutyens' Delhi. It was here that Mrs Gandhi was assassinated by her two Sikh bodyguards on the morning of 31 October 1984.

The Congress party, marks this as the day of Mrs Gandhi's "martyrdom". The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led government at the Centre, keenly appropriating icons from other political streams, celebrated it as 'National Unity Day' to honour the birth anniversary of India's first Deputy Prime Minister Vallabhbhai Patel. Prime Minister Narendra Modi also recently sent out a tweet paying his "tributes" to Mrs Gandhi.

There was, however, virtually no mention of the state-sponsored killings of an estimated 2,733 Sikhs, rape of their women and looting of their homes and shops that went on for over three days following Mrs Gandhi's assassination in November 1984.

The Delhi Police, barring a few officers, actually provided protection to the marauding mobs led by Congress leaders as they desecrated gurdwaras, set Sikh men on fire, cut their beards and hair or grabbed them from their cars or two wheelers to fling them down the nearest railway over-bridge or a flyover.

I was nine years old then, living for those few days with my grandmother in Lodhi Colony, close to where the trouble started as Congress leaders and their followers trooped out of the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) where Mrs Gandhi lay dead. They started by attacking the very first gurdwaras in Karbala, near Lodhi Colony.

The next day the horror unfolded. The plume of black smoke from the gurdwara was just one of several that could be seen in the November sky. Men and boys, including some from our middle class colony, joined in to loot and burn shops owned by Sikhs, returning with their rich haul of books, video cassette players and even chickens from a Sikh-owned jhatka meat shop.

A Sikh boy whom I fleetingly knew was caught and his hair set on fire until local shopkeepers intervened. A burning car tyre was thrown around the neck of another man whom our family knew.

Yet, across Delhi, rumour mills worked overtime to warn Hindu families to stay awake all night with whatever arms they could gather, to counter a possible strike by armed Sikh men or that Sikh militants had poisoned the water supply.

Growing up in Delhi, I have always been surprised at how so few of my classmates in school or university were willing to discuss their experiences of November 1984. Most, outside the world of journalism and activists, have a hazy idea about the enormity of the crimes against the Sikhs. That the Sikhs somehow “had it coming” is, even now, not an uncommon response.

Journalist Nilanjan Mukhopadhyay is a rare breed of writers - the list includes few but notable names like Amitav Ghosh, Manoj Mitta, H S Phoolka, Nandita Haksar, Uma Chakravarti and Sanjay Suri - who have dared to tell the untold agony of 1984. He has interviewed scores of victims and activists to put together their personal experiences of those three fateful days and how it changed them.

Mr Mukhopadhyay is also unsparing in apportioning the culpability of the Punjab problem to Mrs Gandhi and Congress’ decade-long cynical politics to destabilise the Akalis by dismissing their elected governments and dividing the Sikhs by propping up such men as Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale.

He names all the villains of the piece, including Congress leaders who went on to become members of Parliament and Union ministers, and how successive governments at the Centre failed to prosecute the guilty. The agenda, Mr Mukhopadhyay says, was to reduce the Sikhs from an extremely proud community to “weeping wimps” when faced with the “Hindu patriarchy”.

The heart of the painstakingly researched book is in the recounting of personal histories. There is Jarnail Singh, later to fling a shoe at then Home Minister P Chidambaram and currently an Aam Aadmi Party MLA, who says how as an 11-year-old he was made to feel like a terrorist in school.

Filmmaker Safina Uberoi, daughter of academics Patricia and JP S Uberoi, who from thinking herself to be a “white child” born to an Australian mother and an atheist father, went on to discover her Sikh identity. There are heart-wrenching stories from those who survived the riots like sound engineer K J Singh, strategic expert Gurmeet Kanwal, Campa Cola owner Charanjeet Singh and those like IIT Professor Dinesh Mohan and politician Jaya Jaitley who braved the angry mobs to save those in trouble.

There is the case of Avantika Maken, daughter of Congress leader Lalit Maken killed by Sikh terrorists in 1985, who, in a gesture she refuses to explain, moved heaven and earth to ensure that the sentence of one of her father’s killers was commuted.

The author has also detailed the relief effort, particularly the Nagrik Ekta Manch set up to collect material for Sikh families in resettlement colonies. He recounts how a Sikh gentleman arrived every morning with his wife to deposit relief material. A friend of Mr Mukhopadhyay asked the man his name. “My name is Manmohan Singh. I work as the Governor of Reserve Bank of India,” he said and walked away.



Nilanjan Mukhopadhyay dropped college and picked up journalism as a career in the early 1980s. A well-known political commentator, he writes for *The Economic Times*, *The Asian Age*, *Deccan Chronicle*, *Business Standard* and several other well-known publications. In 2013, he wrote *Narendra Modi: The Man*, *The Times*. He is also a playwright.

Publisher: Tranquebar

Pages: 178 pages

Price: Rs. 399

<http://www.amazon.in/Sikhs-Untold-Agony-Nilanjan-Mukhopadhyay/dp/9385152513>

The Amnesty International India Conclave on



Amnesty International India again took the lead to bring back into focus the issue of Justice to the victims of 1984. Judges, journalists, lawyers, activists, academicians and political leaders attended the day-long event in New Delhi's Habitat Centre that saw heated debate on this delay of 32 years in providing justice and made several recommendations for the government. The Conclave was a high-point at the end of a two year campaign that Amnesty had started in 2014 on the 30th anniversary of the anti-Sikh violence.

At this well-attended Conclave named *Insaaf 1984*, civil society came together to demand justice as also to highlight larger issues related with continuing targeted massacres of minorities in this country.

It is a shame that in a country, that prides in calling itself the most vibrant democracy, it should have taken

32 years of wait for the victims to get justice." This call ran as a refrain through the Conclave with speaker after speaker underscoring that there must be systemic changes to bring transformation in political apathy in human rights violations. While most speakers expressed concern over the inaction despite 11 committees and commissions of inquiry having been formed, it was the judges who were the most vocally critical.

Totally disappointed over the fact that for 32 years no justice had been delivered to Sikhs, being citizens of India, Justice Markandey Katju, former judge of the Supreme Court of India stated in no uncertain terms that "judiciary in this country is dead. Justice should mean real justice. The Sikhs have not got justice in 32 years I can assure you they will not get justice from this judiciary. You will have to create people's tribunals. They can investigate and then a PIL can be filed for necessary legal action."



Justice Markandey Katju, flanked by Nilanjan Mukhopadhyay and Justice Anil Dev Singh

Justice Rajinder Sachar, former Chief Justice of the Delhi High Court and noted Human Rights activist echoed the sentiments of Justice Katju. “The judiciary failed at the top. I believe this, and Kuldeep Nayar and myself have been saying so for long. When the Nanavati Commission was appointed we appeared before him informally and said that no doubt we have to find out that who committed these crimes and how they should be punished and the persons who suffered should be compensated but we would want a commission to function like a *Truth and Reconciliation Commission* as it was in South Africa. The point really is that the country must know what really happened, who betrayed us? Who didn’t do his duty?”



Kuldeep Nayar at the Conclave

While disagreeing with the concept of people’s tribunals, Justice Anil Dev Singh was of the view that people’s tribunals would promote lawlessness, he emphasised the need to confiscate the properties of those who spread violence. “We need to legislate that people who spread violence will have to pay reparations, have to compensate the victims. This suggestion was part of my judgment. The government should have been pressured to bring about that legislative change. If a perpetrator of violence knows that if he indulges in violence his property will be confiscated, his children will starve, he will never indulge in violence. Unless you strike terror in them, nothing is ever going to happen.”

The audience, representing the wider civil society, were equally passionate in their presentations. Kuldeep Nayar, senior journalist and also a civil society activist, said: “Society needs to ensure that the victims are properly rehabilitated. We need to see their children come up because this is something that is on the conscience of the Hindus and they will have to make amends.”

Dilip Simeon, a professor of history at Delhi University who has been an active part of civil society raising the demand, standing up for the cause and fighting for right of the victims for justice was at pains to share his experience: “There are two issues theoretically and philosophically that I consider very important and which we do not like to face. One is the concept of ‘collective guilt’, inter-generational transfer of guilt and the other is the concept of ‘genocidal complicity’. This habit of thinking is part of our DNA. I have seen this from the level of the High Court and I am not blaming the entire judiciary or cannot exonerate all the members from communal bias. Gobind Mukhoty presented our report before a High Court judge, who threw it away like a dead rat and said ‘I have no respect for all these people.’ Then he made the comment, when Mukhoty said “Thousands of people have been killed, crimes have been committed”, “these words, I heard him: ‘there was a background to it.’ It is not the responsibility of a judge to say there is a background to it, there is a background to every crime. The responsibility of a judge is to go into the legality of the specific case. He dismissed the request to order FIRs on this ground. I could see that this man is communally biased!”

In 1984 there also was a genocidal complicity. That is why elections were called, that is why people even succeed in those elections because people approve of it.

Several panels debated the issue in its many aspects highlighting the many shortcomings in the political as well as the legal framework. At the same time, some underscored that such a trend started with 1984 had been replicated many times over for political rewards but this is a dangerous one. If a criminal is let off once he can be dangerous to anyone in society.



Harvinder Singh Phoolka making his point

The very person who has been fighting these legal battles for the last 32 years, the advocate HS Phoolka, “regretted that with 1984, a new era started in Indian politics and that era created a template to win the elections. You first arouse the feelings of the people, kill few hundreds and thousands of people, then immediately go to elections and use it to win elections. This happened in 1984, after the elections, Congress won with thumping majority, of two-thirds. In 1993, it happened in Bombay, the



Vrinda Grover and Seema Mustafa

Shiv Sena came to power for the first time after killing of Muslims. In 2002, it happened in Gujarat and in the (General) elections, Modi got such a huge majority. And now, this module is being attempted to be used, before all the elections. They attempted to use it in UP and Delhi in last elections, but it failed....”

Phoolka warned that in the past it was one religious community against the others. But the recent Jat agitation has created a new template: “Wherever there is a mob of a thousand people and there are politicians to back you, there is a powerful policeman or administration to back you, then you go and commit whatever crimes you feel like, nobody will touch you... If you do not check this trend, nobody is safe.”

Thus, as he said: “A message should go loud and clear: *that nobody is above the law in this country. And anyone who commits heinous crimes shall be dealt with sternly, under the law.*”

While overall the issue of institutional failure was underscored, it was also unequivocally stated that there was an urgent need to remedy such inadequacies in law. As noted Supreme Court lawyer and Human Rights activist Vrinda Grover said: “first and foremost the Indian Penal Code uses the word 'riot'. Whether you look at the aftermath of 1984 or 2002 or of Kandhamal there are common threads. Yet you do not have a recognition of this crime which has a different connotation when there is a targeted attack on a certain community, it could be a religious community, it could be an ethnic community, it could be a linguistic community.”

She lamented that the current legal system does not even recognise offences by the state. “Across the globe you look at people... individual criminal responsibility is attracted if you fail to perform certain duties. A very important doctrine of command responsibility or superior responsibility is that if something is happening (e.g Police Inspector Shoorvir Singh Tyagi said he did not know what was happening in Block 32-33 of Trilokpuri) you cannot get away by giving such outrageous statements saying ‘I do not know,’ it will be presumed that you have knowledge, there are people who are under your effective command, you will be held criminally responsible; there is extreme reluctance to introduce any of these elements in the Indian jurisprudence and the



Some of the widows of 1984, suffering for 32 years

reluctance is across party lines, no political party when it is in power, is going to agree to hold itself accountable. We can only be a constitutional democracy if the people who are in positions of power and authority are accountable to us. The other aspect is on the issue of reparations.... My right to justice is comprehensive right. Reparative justice includes principles of compensation"

Kaur delved on the politics of recent times. Bal argued that the Misra Commission had all the material before it but concluded that "if a party in power, a minister, or a well placed person has masterminded or organised the riot, the same would have taken a more serious turn. What does that mean? At what point will murder be murder?" he questioned. "It doesn't matter what the evidence is, if you pick the right person (read pliable) that man will always reach the conclusion the political boss wants."

Continuing on the issue of police responsibility, Siddharth Vardharajan countered the argument made by Amod Kanth that the police is the link between judiciary and justice. "He is right in a technical sense although we have 70 years of evidence to suggest that that is a completely unreliable link but the police is a more reliable link in another context: because the police is the link between the politicians and the commission of crimes, and the commission of

genocide. No act of mass violence in this country can happen or has happened unless the ruling government, or the ruling party has willed it and the ruling politicians and party and government have been able to execute the will of theirs."

He felt that "Unless there are lethal legal consequences, at every level of officialdom for being derelict in duty and in the case of genocide, dereliction has to have a wide definition, and it has to cover crimes leading up to the commission of genocide, and more

importantly the crimes of covering up and insuring that those who were guilty of genocide are now punished."

As a young reporter who covered the pogrom of 1984, Seema Mustafa recalled: "1984 was a landmark change for anybody, the country and in journalism which needed new rules, new accountability. And one of the discussions that we had at Calcutta (at offices of *The Telegraph*, *Anand Bazar Patrika* both headquartered in



The third generation after 1984 - still awaiting justice

Ms Grover specifically referred to institutional bias of the police against the minorities and marginalised communities. "We need to talk about police accountability. The police needs to be purged of the institutional bias which every political party wishes should remain there."

Well-known journalists including Hartosh Bal, Siddharth Vardarajan, Seema Mustafa and Harminder

JUSTICE



Manjit Singh GK flanked by Jaya Jaitley and Kanwar Sandhu

Calcutta) was whether we should say that 200 Sikhs killed or just 200 killed.... I was insisting we use '200 Sikhs' because the minute you say just 200 killed it would feed into the rumour that the 200 were not Sikhs....Two, the political party in power completely moves away and allows a complete paralysis of the system as we saw in '84 and as we saw in 2002.... Thousands here were screaming for help but there was nobody to help them because **the state had turned against the people.** And the third, I think is even more dangerous is post violence where impunity has been given to the people who have been identified as killers, protection is given to them, political parties laud them with garlands, with seats, with tickets, and create an atmosphere through the country that to kill, and to kill with such impunity is allowed. Then there is the appointment of commissions, there is the bureaucracy, there is the complicity of the bureaucracy, the judiciary and the media... the media does, and perhaps reports the violence with a little bit more freedom I would say, or initially a little bit more honesty but when it comes to the third stage the media becomes part of the establishment and we do not write anymore and we also become part of what is operation cover up."

Another senior journalist who has covered the 1984 violence as well as the developments in Punjab and is the author of two books on 1984,

Harminder Kaur, made an impassioned plea to provide a closure to the victims of 1984 by delivering legal justice.: "That closure can happen only if you examine the past, acknowledge it and try and understand it. The victims of 1984 are not the only ones that have suffered, I think their as three generations now and the third generation is continuing to suffer. I think there is need to work on the third generation by either NGOs or by putting systems in place so that they impart some kind of skills so that they can be on their own and move on. For the last 32 years they are frozen in a nightmarish, unbearable moment and must find a closure by punishing the guilty of 1984 that will help them find a way to get beyond it,



Yogendra Yadav and Jaya Jaitley/at the Conclave



Volunteers of Amnesty International India at 'Insaaf Justice '84'

to achieve some respite from the images that continue haunt them.”

Representatives of various political parties were unanimous in their opinion that there has been an unreasonable delay in providing justice. Manjit Singh GK of the Akali Dal and President of the Delhi Sikh Gurdwara Management Committee lamented that while the courts took *suo moto* decision to set up and SIT for Gujarat violence but no such move was made in the case of the 1984 violence.

Jaya Jaitley was of the opinion that despite 32 years having lapsed the hearts of the victims are still not at peace. There is need for apology but that must come from the depth of people’s heart the way Nelson Mandela did so in South Africa.

Kanwar Sandhu, former journalist who has now joined the Aam Admi Party in Punjab felt at least whatever records exist from 1980 or ‘84 onwards should be preserved because whenever there is a wider inquiry at least that inquiry can look at whatever really happened.

On the other hand, Hannan Molla of the CPM was unequivocal in asserting that there should be justice

delivered to the victims, perpetrators be prosecuted and there should be future protection from genocide. Just as the Nuremberg trials have given some sort of consolation to the Jews who were massacred, if Parliament as an entity apologises as part of national conscience then it may give some respite to the victims.

Yogendra Yadav of Swaraj Abhiyaan was of the opinion that “as a country we have never expressed shame over what happened in 1984. Unless we are regretful about the past we will not be able to prevent such incidents in the future”.

Prof Amarjeet Singh Narang concluded by asserting that the basic purpose behind this meeting was to impress upon the State that it still has time to come out clean, rededicate its commitment to the Constitution and to rededicate its constitutional duties towards the rule of law, democratic and secular norms.

After the day-long deliberations Amnesty International India culled out various recommendations given by the speakers, and proposed to send these to the Ministry of Home Affairs (see next pages):

Effective investigation:

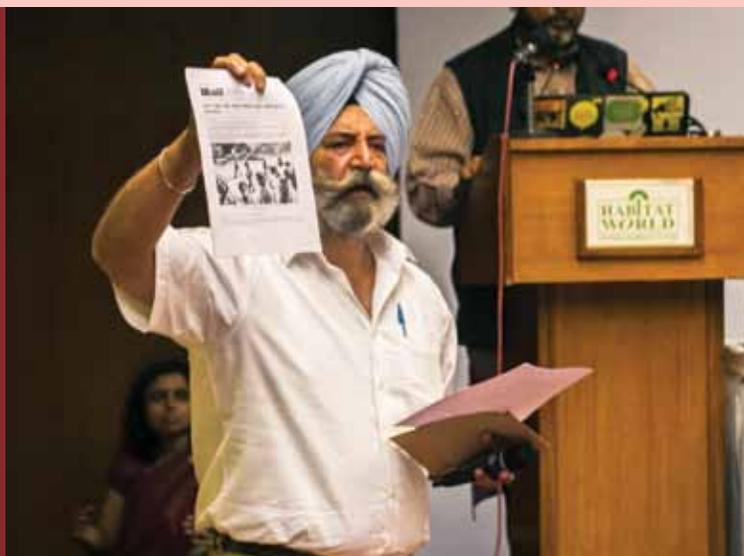
- Ensure that the SIT conducts a prompt and transparent investigation into the cases, including by making proceedings accessible to the media and the public, while allowing victims and witnesses to request confidential hearings to protect themselves from reprisal.
- Facilitate the participation of victims and witnesses from outside India, including through video-conferencing.
- Ensure that the SIT files charges against suspected perpetrators wherever sufficient evidence is found.
- Ensure that all those suspected of involvement in the killings, including those with command responsibility, are prosecuted.
- Provide adequate protection to victims and witnesses to ensure that investigations and prosecutions can proceed without fear of reprisals.
- Comprehensive reparation to follow.



Comprehensive Plan

Develop and implement a comprehensive plan for reparation in full consultation with the victims and survivors of 1984, including young people, women and girls, and rights groups working with them.

- The plan should be in line with the UN Basic Principles and Guidelines on the Right to Remedy and Reparation for Victims of Gross Violations of International Human Rights Law.
- It should entitle all persons who suffered physical or mental injury, emotional suffering, economic loss or substantial impairment of their fundamental rights during the 1984 violence to reparation.
- Reparation should include compensation for any economically assessable damage, including lost opportunities such as employment, education, and social benefits; and material damages and loss of earnings, including loss of earning potential.
- Issue a formal public apology on behalf of the Government of India, including an acknowledgement of the facts and acceptance of responsibility.



Legal and policy reforms:

Enact a robust law to prevent and respond to communal and targeted violence, which incorporates international human rights principles of superior and command responsibility, relief, return, and resettlement.

- o The law should also recognise the right to remedy and reparation for all persons affected by communal and targeted violence, including internally displaced people.
- o It should provide for immediate rescue and relief in the case of communal or targeted violence.
- o It should recognise that the right to reparation includes restitution, rehabilitation, satisfaction and guarantees of non-repetition.
- o Establish a comprehensive and adequately resource victim and witness protection programme at the central and state levels, which should not be associated with state agencies such as the police.
- o Undertake comprehensive police reforms to insulate the police from political interference and pressure.
- o Work with state governments to establish police complaints authorities at the state and district levels to investigate complaints about police misconduct.
- o Work with state governments to establish fixed tenure for police officers, and set up a board to monitor recruitment, appointment and transfer of police personnel.



Harminder Kaur of Amnesty International India, who was an integral part of the Conclave on the 1984 pogrom has written this account. She is an experienced print and electronic media journalist with more than thirty years of work behind her. She has specialised in Sikh studies and political analyses. Her book 'Blue Star Over Amritsar' was first released nearly twenty years ago and went into a new and second edition in 2007. It is an acclaimed work of scholarship on Sikh politics and was followed by her latest book '1984: Lessons from History'.

“The Missing People”

Focus on Sindhi Sikhs in India



All Images for representative purposes

This article argues for the inclusion of ‘Sindhi Sikhs’ – a minor group in terms of religion, language and number – into the archives of Partition, Sindh and Sikh scholarship. Terming this group as the ‘missing people’, we draw attention to contexts that might have made them slip through the cracks of the three archives. At a more fundamental level, the paper critiques the processes by which strait-jacketed definitions of a ‘Hindu’ or a ‘Sikh’ make invisible those who, in the logic of modern nations, appear to have oxymoronic identities. What role did Partition play in this matter? Did Partition cause further ruptures, and what kinds of negotiations did the Sindhi Sikhs undertake during and after Partition?

In the course of research for this essay, we often faced puzzled looks. When mentioning that we were writing a paper on the Sindhi Sikhs, variations of questions such as “You mean Sardars, right? But aren’t they Punjabis?” followed in some cases, and in others, complete silence at what appeared to be a strange category. The combination of scant knowledge about the Sindhi community in general, and the synonymy assumed between ‘Punjabi’ and ‘Sikh’, made it incumbent on us to provide apposite information on Sindhis as well as the historically trans-regional character of Sikhism.

One of our young (in her thirties) respondents, Manpreet Chandanani, revealed how she faced such questions even during formal interviews. She was asked if she was a ‘converted Sikh?’ Experiencing the illegitimacy conferred upon her by such a question, she asked us why we thought these questions were being asked and whether they would have been asked had her community continued to live in pre-Partition Sindh? While an answer to that question may point us to the symptomatic nature of identity formation in contemporary India and its strait-jacketed definitions, we felt a beginning

had to be made by exploring the life of Sindhi Sikhs in Sindh and their migration to post-Partition India. Our interviews focused upon the historical and psychological dimensions of a partition community. The ramifications of that experience, as well as new morphologies of region, language and religion in post-Independence India, are certainly important to us; however, we must first introduce the Sindhi Sikhs as a community that exists and also as a subject of Partition.

Meanwhile, there are three possible archives in which we ought to have expected Sindhi Sikhs to figure: Partition; studies on the Sindhi community; and Sikhism. But the Sindhi Sikhs are missing from all three. By bringing out this story, we hope to explore the following questions: what memories of a pre-Partition Sindh do the Sikhs carry? How do they look upon the moment of being wrenched out of their context? What kind of experience of border-crossing did they have? In their transition from being refugees of an independent nation to economically and culturally self-sufficient citizens, what negotiations had to be made? Did they experience the same anxiety as the Sindhi Hindus did trying to assimilate into a larger fold? If so, what did that larger fold signify for them, considering their religion was different from that of the Sindhi Hindus? More to our purpose, what role did Partition and Indian subject hood play in the dialectic of region, language and religion, for instance?



The Dispersion

Dispersed over different parts of India like other Partition migrants from Sindh, the Sindhi Sikhs are an urban population. As migrants from Sindh, they at first lived close to Sindhi Hindus in refugee camps and continue to have social and business transactions with them. Their numbers are very small. By piecing together household enumeration by the community in India, information from newspapers and interviews with scholars in Pakistan, and figures cited in existing scholarship, it is possible to hazard that the number of

Sindhi Sikhs in India may be between 18,000 and 20,000. According to the 1941 census in Pakistan, there were approximately 32,000 Sikhs in Sindh prior to Partition. A newspaper report published in Karachi in 2014 referred to the presence of approximately 10,000 Sindhi Sikhs in Pakistan. Additionally, a respondent based in Pune shared with us a household survey carried out by the Sindhi Sikh community in 2009, which shows fewer than 20,000 Sindhi Sikhs in India. For reasons of access, if we restrict our observations just to India, it can be said that even this small group of 20,000 or so is not a homogenous one. A conglomeration of endogamous groups, the Sindhi Sikhs have regional affiliations to Sindh, which, besides other religio-social emphases, help them identify themselves as Bandai, Nawabshahi, Naichan, etc. Given the scope of this article, we have chosen to focus on the community's perceived similarity to and difference from other categories, rather than its internal differences. The underlying memory of Sindh as an idea and region, and also the language Sindhi, remain common to all the groups within the rubric of Sindhi Sikhs. A distinct self-image as 'Sindhi Sardar' (as opposed to Punjabi Sardar as well as Sindhi Hindu) informs the community's self-description. In more specific and local contexts, the linguistic or religious dimensions of their identity may also come into play, making them more Sindhi at some times, and more Sikh at others.

As noted above, the Sindhi Sikhs are **the** missing people. They do not figure in studies on Sikhism, Sindh or Partition. There could be several reasons for this, the most obvious one being the size of the community.



Bilawal Bhutto son of Benajir Bhutto from Larkana in the Sindh, with Sikhs of the region

However, the enumerative logic obfuscates deeper contexts of 'invisibilisation', and we are well aware that the small numbers of Parsis or Jews, for instance, has not led to their complete absence from scholarship. As far as scholarship on Sindh is concerned, the Sindhi Sikhs have been subsumed under the category 'Sindhis', and dominated by Hindus or Muslims, with Sikhs perhaps assumed to be extensions of Hindus. The linguistic-regional continuum across different religions may be a partial explanation, as too the historical and continued intimacy between Hindus and Sikhs. On the other hand, as Jodhka rightly points out, Sikh studies have neglected the community's social composition, especially its internal differences and the population's dynamics. As he remarks, "dominant narratives of the scholarship in Sikh studies has been historical and theological, focused mostly around questions of interpretations of the Sikh spiritual authority and the Sikh past".

Furthermore, studies on Sikhism have restricted themselves to the Punjab region. Meanwhile, scholarship on Partition followed a specific trajectory of concerns before arriving as it has, in recent times, at more regional and varied community experiences. The ongoing and inconclusive nature of our understanding of Partition is reflected in emerging scholarship that continues to redefine existing paradigms. In some sense, scholarship on Sindhi Sikhs (or lack of it) is part of the same unfinished business of Partition. Very significantly, too, scholars working with the Sindhi language who were well enough equipped to document the oral testimonies of the Partition generation were very few in number, and so the invaluable archive of the generation that went through Partition has not been recorded.

In the last decade, new scholarship on Sindh has demonstrated the displacement and exile of the Sindhi Hindus, so complicating perceptions of violence and identity politics. Another study has shifted the discourse from Sindhi Hindus and their migration to Sindhi Muslims and the closure of migration. Based on Sindhi Muslims living at the border of Kutch, this study argues for a re-imagination of Sindh and for extending the understanding of Partition to the promulgation of international boundaries in western India. To these two categories of Sindhis, we bring a third category – that of Sindhi Sikhs.

The Sindhi Sikh Identity

This article has its roots in the personal, though that is not where it ends. The two researchers belong to the Sindhi community: Rita Kothari is a Hindu, Jasbirkaur Thadhani a Sikh. The two researchers share the gendered and cultural context of 'Sindhiness' – an elusive concept

given the rupture caused to territory and history in the wake of Partition. The remnants of what can be seen as Sindhi-ness and its attendant practices are manifest in the Sindhi language. Both researchers are also the last generation of their families to speak this language. In addition to sharing linguistic, cultural and historical contexts, the two researchers also share, to a certain extent, the language of the sacred. Hinduism of the kind practised by Sindhi Hindus is profoundly shaped by the teachings of Guru Nanak. Rita Kothari grew up in a family that believed in the Guru Granth Sahib, the main Sikh religious scripture, and invoked Guru Nanak more frequently than Ram or Krishna.

Jasbirkaur Thadhani lives in Kubernagar, a former refugee camp in the city of Ahmedabad that housed Sindhi refugees at the time of their rehabilitation and resettlement. As a member of the Sikh community, she sees the theological and linguistic parts of her identity as forming an anomalous relationship, and is led to ask what might be the context for understanding the level of others' ignorance and surprise associated with having a Sindhi Sikh identity. She also observes a movement away from Sindhi-ness towards a stronger Khalsa identity, evident already in the change of surnames in her extended family. Thus the two researchers bring to this paper a lifetime of experience combined with historical sources and ethnographic investigations.

Sindh and the Permeability of Sikhism

The region of Sindh had a historical intimacy with Punjab. Khushwant Singh wrote: 'As regions that



A congregation at Nankana Sahib, including several Sindhi Sikhs

bled into each other's geography, it is only natural that linguistic-cultural overlapping of Sindh and Punjab would be enormous', although marked by 'both proximity and wariness'. As a frontier area between Balochistan in the northwest, and parts of modern-day Rajasthan and Gujarat, the region of Sindh witnessed over centuries non-textualised and flexible practices of what would today be seen as 'Hinduism', 'Islam' and 'Sikhism'. Sufi traditions rather than Quranic practices characterised Islam there and touched the lives of Hindus and Sikhs as well. As for the Hindus, they were governed by mercantile pragmatism, so the rigid classifications of sect and caste were avoided for a more pluralistic approach in which many gods (and especially the figure of Guru Nanak) fitted into their world-view. A method of gentle discipline called 'sahaj', advocated by Guru Nanak, was particularly adopted in Sindh.

In terms of political trajectory, the province of Sindh was ruled at different points by Muslim rulers who do not constitute one homogenous group. When annexed by the British in 1843, the province became part of the larger Bombay Presidency, only to ask for separation in the 1930s. It is not being implied here that Sindh was an isolated area, but given its geographical location and demography, it was closer in spirit to the northwest part of the subcontinent than what would be considered 'mainstream' India. In the run-up to Partition, Sindh played an important role. It was a theatre for the dream of the creation of Pakistan, a Muslim-majority province



that witnessed the making of some of the most foundational decisions of the 1940s. In the wake of Partition, Sindh went in its entirety to Pakistan, leaving its non-Muslim inhabitants feeling somewhat insecure and unwanted. The departure of Hindu Sindhis (as well as other religious minorities) from Sindh and their journeys to various parts of India, followed by processes of rehabilitation and resettlement and the re-inscription of post-Partition identity, have now been addressed by several scholars. A tiny sub-group among those Sindhis who left were the Sindhi-speaking Sikhs.

It is illustrative of the ties between Sindhi Hindus and Sikhism that barely five years after Partition, and in the first decade of their resettlement in India, the Sindhi Hindus had transliterated the Guru Granth Sahib from the Gurmukhi to the Devnagari script. Writing on behalf of the Sahitya Akademi (National Academy of Letters), LH Ajwani described this as a remarkable achievement in his survey of literary activities in Sindhi:

As almost all the Sindhi Hindus are devoted to the Sikh scriptures and teachings of the Sikh Gurus, and many of them read the Granth Sahib daily, the service done by Jethanand Lalwani to the entire Sindhi community can hardly be overestimated. In the writings of the Sindhis the Granth Sahib is a perpetual fountain of inspiration even as the English Bible has been to writers in English, and the publication of the Granth Sahib in Sindhi characters will do much to stimulate literary activity among the Sindhis.

It is also possible to talk about the close ties between Hinduism and Islam in Sindh. Steven Ramey begins his book on the Sindhi Hindus in Lucknow with the following statement: 'A disciple of a Muslim sufi advised a community of Hindus in Lucknow, India, to install the Guru Granth Sahib, a text that is central for Sikhs.

Before we go further, it is important to broadly summarise the tenets and history of Sikhism. Scholars are divided on when 'Sikhism' as we know it today became a distinct and organised religion. Harjot Oberoi's landmark study demonstrates the 'brittleness of our textbook classifications' with respect to religions in South Asia. Drawing a distinction between the early period when Sikh tradition did not show much concern for establishing distinct religious boundaries, to the formation of Singh Sabhas, the Gurudwara Act and the Shiromani Gurudwara Parbandhak Committee, Oberoi has drawn attention to the historical moment of the institutionalisation of Sikhism. Apart from him, others also argue that the markers of region, language, caste and class that characterise our perception of Sikhism today were the outcome of specific political developments.

Views also diverge on whether Guru Nanak should be seen as the 'founder' of Sikhism, considering how his spiritual pursuits are only a part of the evolutionary history of Sikhism. Be that as it may, it is beyond dispute that he is foundational to the sant or devotional aspect of Sikhism. Guru Nanak lived from 1469 to 1539 in the



Harjeet Singh ji (Sindhi) Malerkotla Wale

Punjab. His itinerant preaching left a profound impact in many parts of northern India that continues in both overt and covert ways. Sindh in particular carries strong memories passed from generation to generation of Guru Nanak and his companions, their conversations, teachings and the overall principle of renunciation. It is quite possible that northern Sindh (especially Sukker and Shikarpur) came under the influence of Sikhism through the travels of Guru Nanak, although it seems likely that at this stage that is during the first two centuries of early Sikhism, processes of institutionalising faith were few, if any. So whether this influence translated into conversions of Hindu Sindhis, or remained only at the level of a profound allegiance to Guru Nanak, is an open question. Nevertheless, the Sindhi satsang tradition drew heavily on the life and times of Guru Nanak. The Sindhi Hindu temple, known as a tikaana, would invariably have a picture of Guru Nanak (and quite often even the Guru Granth Sahib) in addition to Hindu gods such as Ram and Krishna. Until the 1984 anti-Sikh pogrom following the assassination of Indira Gandhi, in cities such as Jakarta and Manila, it was possible to see Sindhi Hindus and Sikhs sharing the same gurdwara (temple). In more recent times, however, such commonly shared spaces between both Sindhi Hindus and Sindhi Sikhs, as well as between Sindhi Hindus and Punjabi Sikhs, have begun to decline, an issue that has both local and global contexts for how religion is defined today.

To return to the tenets of Sikhism, the Panth (community) initiated by Guru Nanak was consolidated through Guru Angad. The territory covered by Guru Nanak's teachings expanded through him into the region where the three significant points of the Majha, Malwa and Doaba areas converge. Guru Angad's successor, Guru Amar Das, directed the affairs of the Panth from 1552 to 1574. Changes introduced by Guru Amar Das included the appointment of territorial deputies or vicars (masand) and the conferring of a distinctively Sikh status upon specific places, specific occasions and specific rituals. Incidentally, the Sindhi surname Masand refers to this moment of Guru Amar Das' intervention in the region of Sindh. Many scholars posit 1603, the year of the compilation of the Adi Granth (the Guru Granth Sahib), as the next very significant moment in the self-image of Sikhism because it was no longer of 'uncertain identity'.

Guru Arjan Dev, the compiler of the Guru Granth Sahib, is also a much revered figure in the homes and temples of Sindhi Hindus, who worship the Guru Granth Sahib more than any other religious text. As well, the Guru Granth Sahib is used as a witness to marriages, deaths and on many other social occasions. The tikaanas or Hindu-Sikh shared gurdwaras are common spaces for those who worship (or rather worshipped) only the 'Guru' (Guru Nanak) as well as those who saw the 'Guru' as a figure along the continuum of Hindu gods. After the death of Guru Arjan Dev in 1606, the self-image of Sikhism took on

a special emphasis. Given the hostilities between the Panth and the Lahore administration from the seventeenth century onwards, the nature of mentorship amongst the gurus changed. Sikh self-defence in the face of attacks by the Mughal administration and the 'martyrdoms' of Guru Hargobind (1644), Guru Tegh Bahadur (1661-65) and Guru Gobind Singh (1666-75) changed the tenor of Sikhism. The new ideal was not simply being sant, spiritual or devotional, but also being a sipahi, or warrior. The region of Sindh shows allegiance mostly to the sant side of Sikhism, although there are exceptions.



Sikhs, many of them from Sind, at Nankana Sahib



The Elusive Nature of Origins

In the process of working on this article, a question that assailed us (but that was mired in obscurity and speculation) was ‘when’ did Sikhism take root in Sindh? We are using this section to foreground not only the difficulty of providing a historically accurate answer, but also, to a certain extent, the fallacious assumptions made in asking the question itself. A subset of the same question, appearing rather spectrally, is also the issue of conversion. Perhaps the term ‘conversion’ is misleading given how many Hindus embrace partially or fully the teachings of Sikhism with or without formalising the relationship. ‘Conversion’ implies a specific moment and a complete transformation of identity from one to the other, neither of which are easily available in identifiable form in the South Asian region. We discovered at a very early stage of our research that the term ‘conversion’ was offensive to our respondents and interlocutors. It smacked of illegitimacy, that is to say that converts were not originally Sikhs, and so carried association with stigmatised castes. We therefore asked some respondents when Sikhism began in Sindh, or when they became Sardars. However, at best, this question too was met with bewilderment – the answers ranging from legends dating back to the seventeenth century to events in the twentieth century. More importantly, Hindu and Sikh practices in many households were not clearly demarcated and the regions of Punjab and Sindh bled into each other, as did the boundaries of languages.

Through valuable scholarship, the historian Himadri Banerjee has drawn attention to Sikh minorities in the regions of Assam and West Bengal. Like the Sindhi

Sikhs, the minorities Banerjee chose to focus upon have also escaped the radar of scholarship. However, his research has been able to pin down a historical moment that brought the Asomiya and Kolkata Sikhs to the eastern part of the country. Unlike them, there does not seem to be one single moment that explains how Sikhism came into Sindh. Perhaps even to ask this question would be to assume the validity of the present-day understanding of ‘Punjab’ and ‘Sindh’ as two entirely separate regions. We would like to underscore that there were multiple impulses that must have strengthened the intimacy between Sindh and Punjab, and Sikhism may be one of its outcomes. Mathew Cook, for example, argues that many Punjabis migrated to Sindh during the eighteenth century and were

eventually absorbed into the Lohana community, an all-encompassing community that includes the vast majority of the Hindus of Sindh. In a similar vein, Scott Levi argues that many firms in Multan in Punjab moved their bases to Shikarpur in Upper Sindh following geopolitical changes surrounding the rise of the Durrani regime in Afghanistan in the mid eighteenth century. There are also legends surrounding Guru Gobind Singh’s recruitment of a new set of believers from Sindh in the seventeenth century. The colonial administrator John Malcolm confirmed this story, suggesting that it was ‘the only means by which he could ever hope to oppose the Muhammedan government with success’.

One of our respondents, Hotusingh Guler, was asked: “*Tawahaan Sardar kadhinthiya?* (‘When did you become a Sardar?’). The question met with some surprise:

Kadhinthiya? When do you mean? Well, I suppose, at the time of Banda Bahadur. Baba Banda, you have heard of him? He was a disciple of Guru Gobind Singh. This must be in Punjab. Our ancestors used to live in Multan. Later we must have come along the Indus for work, and settled in Nawabshah, which is not far from Punjab.

By contrast, another respondent, Ram Gulrajani, traced his Sikh identity to his maternal great-grandfather in the nineteenth century. According to him:

My mother’s Nana was a turbaned Sikh from Punjab, who settled down in Sehwan Shah. His daughter, as in my maternal grandmother, was married into [a Hindu] Khanchandani family from Hyderabad. She was a Sikh to the core, and so was my mother. My mother had four sons, of which I am the only

one who was made a Sikh. My brothers are Hindu.

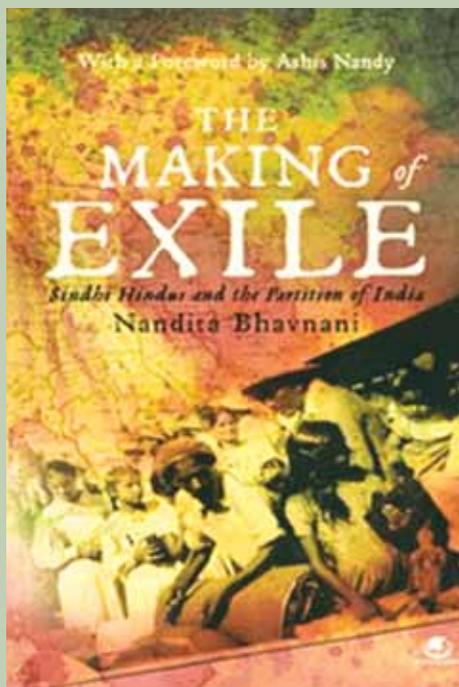
Here Gulrajani affirmed a common practice among Hindu families in both Sindh and Punjab whereby one of the children (usually the eldest) was 'gurdinno' or 'given to the Guru'. In such a scenario, the atmosphere at home was a mixture of Hindu and Sikh practices, leaning sometimes more towards one than the other. Gulrajani's account is instructive in this regard:

Both my grandmothers stayed with us. There was Guru Granth Sahib at home (till my mother was alive) and we all grew up reciting Gurbani. We did go to temples and we did hear a lot of stories of Hindu gods and goddesses but our prayers have always been and continue to be from the Gurbani. My elder brother till today recites 'Japji Sahib' for 25 to 30 minutes before breakfast. At Tirupati in the presence of the deity, he recites 'Japji Sahib' because none of us know any other prayers. All death ceremonies in my family are carried out as per Sikh rites. My sisters married into non-Sindhi Hindu families. Two of them are no more and both were cremated according to Sikh rites and their follow-up ceremonies too were carried out as per Sikh rites. My father too was cremated on the banks of [the] Ganges at Patna but all his follow-up rites were carried out in Patna Sahib Gurdwara where Guru Gobind Singh was born. I was married in a gurdwara in Hyderabad (now in Telangana) to a Sindhi Hindu girl, who after marriage only recites 'Japji Sahib' and 'Sukhmani Sahib' because she too never learnt any Hindu prayers. Mine is a family where Sikhism is ingrained in our subconscious although only I call myself a Sikh while all [the] others are Hindus. No one knows any Hindu prayers, although we do keep hearing and enjoying both bhajans and Gurbani Shabd Kirtan.

The most common historical document used by Hindu Sindhis, namely Berumal Advani's *Sindh Jay Hindun Jee Tarikh* (History of the Hindus in Sindh), does not mention a specific period to mark the beginning of Sikhism in Sindh. Whether the origin can be determined by the establishment of a gurdwara, or by the receiving of the first Guru Granth Sahib, or of baptism effected under Guru Gobind Singh's drive towards the creation of a Khalsa identity, or even earlier when traders and pilgrims from Sindh encountered the teachings of Guru Nanak in the Indus region, is difficult to decide. However, it is possible to point to influential figures in the history of Sikhism in Sindh; a recurring name is that of Baba Tharia Singh. The dissemination of Sikhism through Tharia Singh is now a part of the lore circulating among his (ever) increasing followers, even in post-Partition India.

Leaving Sindh

In the months preceding Partition, Sindh was relatively calm. Several accounts of this period tell us that although the lines dividing Hindus and Muslims sharpened somewhat in twentieth-century Sindh, it was difficult to say in July and August 1947 whether Sindh would meet the fate of its neighbour, Punjab. The shadow of Punjab hovered over Sindh, particularly on its Sikh community, who, in the perceptions of the perpetrators of violence, were no different from the Sikhs of Punjab. Although it is difficult to estimate the extent of the violence, Bhavnani observes that "Sikhs in Sindh had been targeted (by Muslims) for violence because Punjabi Sikhs had played a significant role in the communal violence in East Punjab." Furthermore, we can see in the narratives that follow that the migration of Sikhs from Sindh was characterised by greater urgency and terror than the Sindhi Hindu narratives discussed in the Introduction to this article. For safety, the Sindhi Sikhs left in large groups, fearing the wrath their turbans and kirpans would bring down on them. They took the same routes out as the Sindhi Hindus, arriving in India via the train from Hyderabad to Rajasthan, or via ship from Karachi to the ports of Bombay and Gujarat. Like the Sindhi Hindu refugees, they lived in camps provided by the states of Maharashtra, Gujarat and Rajasthan, and in Delhi. However, we also see further migration later in the 1950s for reasons of economic opportunity, or by girls who underwent quick marriages and were sent off safely to their new homes.



Scholar Nandita Bhavnani has written this well-researched book, 'The Making of Exile: Sindhi Hindus and the Partition of India'. Bhavnani was born into a family which migrated from Sindh soon after Partition, and yet she does not let the stories she heard cloud her objectivity, remaining impartial to the core

Sindh to Amritsar: The Persistence of Fear in Tej Kaur's Life



9th October 1947: Sindhi Hindu and Sikh women and children arriving at Bombay on the British-India liner Dwarka, from Karachi after their flight

"Kachhari mein puchte hain umar kya hai? Maine kaha, pata nahin. Naam bhi poora Sukker mein reh gaya. (They ask me in a court, what is your age? I tell them I don't know. Even my entire name is left behind in Sukker)."

Tej Kaur could be in her late seventies. She was born in a village near Sukker in northern Sindh, where her father traded livestock. Tej Kaur is one of the few women amongst the Sindhi Sikhs who remembers crossing the border into India as a Partition migrant. Her memory is sharp in some respects, but diffuse in many others. Available to us only in fragments, her narrative is a bewildering mixture of the Sindhi and Punjabi languages. It holds the clear presence of fear at the memory of violence and aggression towards the Sikh community before as well as after Partition. If the source of fear when leaving Sindh was the 'Muslim', in later years, it was the Indian state that exuded a threat towards her.

Tej Kaur remembers for instance that she left Hyderabad with her extended family by taking a train from Hyderabad (in Sindh) that arrived in Pali (in Rajasthan). She was approximately ten years old at the time. "We heard that they were killing Sardars. They were also killing little children." "Who were they?" we asked. "Who else? Musulman". A rhetorical question pointing to Muslims followed. And did she see anybody die? "Mainu suna tha, meri dadi ne bataya tha. (I had heard it from my grandmother)", she said. It was not clear whether the grandmother had witnessed the event, but

hearsay, fear and experience had become blurred in Tej Kaur's account.

The recurring statement "*Musulman aa riha hai*" (The Muslim is coming") suggested an urgency to move, to defend, and also to attack if necessary. "We were told keep the swords ready with you, don't be scared. We had our kirpans ready. Police followed us, they kept saying, these are Sardars, they are sewadaris of Guru Gobind Singh. Don't dare touch them". She said that the train carried all of her biradari, her community of Sindhi Sikhs: "*Poori gaadi mein Sardar they*" (The entire train was filled with Sardars"). Her pronunciation of the word 'gaadi' was Sindhi, while the rest of the sentence appeared to be Punjabi, as boundaries between regions, languages and experiences blurred between Punjab and Sindh. The violence that had occurred in Punjab increased the vulnerability of the Sindhi Sikhs. "We would have liked to visit Hazoor Sahib before leaving, but we were advised not to do that. *Wahan to bahut maarkaath ho rahi thi* (There is a lot of stabbing and bloodshed there)".

Tej Kaur's family eventually arrived in Pali. Although it was not clear to us whether the incidents of violence she remembered being told about occurred during the journey or upon arriving in Pali, the family's period of rehabilitation in Ajmer was communicated to us with horrifying banality. From Pali, a contingent of Sindhi Sikhs moved to the city of Ajmer. The area called Diggi Bazaar, which has the hustle and bustle characteristic of old cities, was provided to the Sindhi refugees for resettlement. Without making it obvious, the state authorities allocated to the refugees homes that had been abandoned by Muslims who had fled to Pakistan. As for those Muslims who had not left, there was a tacit understanding among the Sindhi Sikhs that their homes had to be made empty one way or another. Tej Kaur told us proudly that her family had made every Muslim leave, and that each Sardar evicted Muslim families and occupied their homes. Tej Kaur studied in Ajmer for one or two years, then at the age of fourteen, she was married to a Sindhi Sikh family living in Amritsar.

In 1984, her son was detained on suspicion of being somehow involved in the assassination of Indira Gandhi. The family had a restaurant near Harmandir Sahib (the Golden Temple). She told us that the restaurant was raided and her son arrested: "*Andar kabja kar liya. Jaggi Moni khe khani vaya. Itni police aayi, itni fauj aayi. Batwara yaad aa gaye*" (They had occupied the restaurant, and took away Jaggi and Moni. There were so many police,

and also army. It reminded me of Partition)". The story of fear continued in Tej Kaur's life, an account related to us in an animated, feisty and yet terror-filled voice.

Settling in Ahmedabad: Mehrwan Singh's narration of fulfilment

At what were once 'outskirts' of Ahmedabad in the 1940s and 1950s, army barracks used during World War II were offered as rehabilitation camps for the Sindhi refugees. These are now well-established colonies known by the names of Kubernagar, Sardarnagar and Krishnanagar. The Chharas, a Denotified Tribe, also live in the vicinity. Sindhi Hindus, Sindhi Sikhs, Chharas and even lower-class Muslims live in this cluster of colonies from Sardarnagar to Naroda Patiya. Mehrwan Singh has been living in Kubernagar since he left the temporary refugee camps and settled in the camp there. A proud old man, Mehrwan Singh is satisfied with what he has managed to do despite Partition, and spends his old age with his wife, reading the Guru Granth Sahib.

Mehrwan Singh's memories of the pre-Partition past are filled with pride and satisfaction. His recollections of big cities such as 'Lahore, Multan, Hyderabad and Nawabshah', the environs of his childhood, and the proximity of Nawabshah to the holy city of Amritsar, 'which was only 30 kilometres away', evoke for Mehrwan Singh images of a fortuitous social and geographical location. Although it is difficult to say when Mehrwan Singh's ancestors adopted Sikhism, his own mythology suggests that it might have been at the time of the Mughal emperor, Aurangzeb:

"When Aurangzeb wreaked havoc upon the Sikhs, the Sikhs began hiding in secret places. That was four or five centuries ago. Guru Gobind Singh decided to increase the number of Sikhs, and he said 'I will create a new jati'. I don't know exactly, but I am the fourth or fifth generation of Sindhi Sardars in my family. As such we are no different from Sindhi [Hindus] in terms of our former caste."

Referring to the trading middle castes in Sindh, Mehrwan Singh told us that "we were the same as Ahujas and Chawlas. In fact my mother was a Nagpal". And pointing to his wife, he said: "She is a Jethra. She is from Hyderabad (Sind)". He himself belonged to a landowning family that would have been sufficiently well off to have hired agricultural labourers or *haaris* rather than work the land themselves. Mehrwan Singh told us: "We were zamindars. Muslim *haaris* tilled our land. We would divide the harvest between us. I remember Muslim women would take me in their lap like I was their son". A glow of warmth suffused his face when he remembered that as a little boy he would play on the

farms, and the Sindhi Muslim families loved him as if he was one of their own.

According to Mehrwan Singh, he was "13 or 14 years old at the time of Partition. I took a train from Nawabshah to Karachi, and then a steamer from Karachi to Bombay. The conditions under which we took the steamer were frightening. It cost us Rs19.50. We were more than ten people traveling on the basis of a single ticket. We would take turns, so for instance, one person would leave luggage, bring the ticket and another one would have a turn". Upon asking whether his immediate or extended family had witnessed any violence in the process of leaving Sindh, Mehrwan Singh responded: "*Asaanjo ker muo na* (None of 'ours' was killed)". He clarified that the Sindhi Muslims had actually extended help to the departing Hindu and Sikhs at the time of Partition. Those Muslims were *shareef*, he said, good and dignified people. They were courteous and respectful, 'adab' and 'izzat deendha huya'. "Had he had experience of Muslims who were not courteous and respectful?" we asked. His response reiterated a familiar story among Sindhi refugees that attributed violence to *baahir ja Musulman* or 'outsider Muslims': "The ones who came from here — Hindustan to Sindh, they wreaked violence."

.He continued: "Meanwhile, my family had arrived in Jodhpur by train. All safely, about 300-400 Sardars from my community. So from Bombay I went to Jodhpur, only to proceed further up to Amritsar. I stayed in Amritsar till 1957". In Amritsar, Mehrwan Singh, not unlike millions of Sindhis, moved from being the son of a zamindar to doing 'labour work': "We could have taken up agriculture, but the news about being offered land in Alwar, Rajasthan, came too late. By then everyone had dispersed".

Eventually the family moved to Ahmedabad because it had better arrangements for rehabilitation:

"We also came to know that the government provided compensation of land and property to the refugees. I have to say that Nehru's government did a lot for us. My family managed to get a house after putting a request for a claim for the property we lost in Sindh. It was nothing compared to what we had lost. But in Kubernagar there were so many of our people that it was good to live here. I trained myself as a wire man, got a licence in 1960 and that is what I did for the rest of my life. Look at these wires (pointing to them), I was in charge of the whole Kubernagar area when I was appointed as a wireman in 1960. Since then I have lived in Kubernagar. From zamindar to labourer to wireman, there were many hardships. You know I rode a bicycle for twenty years and my earning was Rs. 400 per month."

Sindh-Pali-Ajmer: Hotusingh's Memories of Partition

The city of Ajmer in Rajasthan is an understudied Partition site. Sindhis who did not or could not travel by sea and land to Bombay or to coastal Gujarat, or travel by air to Delhi, took the only train from Mirpur Khas

Bazaar was once again left to Muslims. Hotusingh Guler Khalsa, a Sindhi Sikh who settled in Ajmer during Partition, has vivid memories of the period, of the new economies of power and religion in Ajmer. Proud of his distinct identity as a Sindhi Sikh, Hotusingh also takes pride in being a part of a larger linguistic Sindhi identity.



to western Rajasthan. The station of arrival was Pali; however, in the months following the refugees' arrival, Ajmer became an important destination. The influx of refugees into Pali included both Hindus and Sikhs, and they dispersed across to Beawar, Jodhpur, Ajmer, Kota, Bikaner and many other towns of Rajasthan. Economic opportunities were greater in Ajmer given its religious and historical importance. Our interactions with both Sindhi Sikhs and Hindus show that Ajmer must have witnessed a violent period in the wake of Partition. The homes of Muslims departing for Pakistan, and at times even the ones still occupied by them, were forcibly emptied by refugees from Sindh. Diggi Bazaar in Ajmer, mentioned earlier, is but one example of an area that came to be occupied by Hindus and Sikhs. However, once the refugee community acquired economic and social mobility, its members moved out to more gentrified localities such as Ajay Nagar and Vaishali Nagar. Diggi

Hotusingh sits comfortably outside the provision store his son runs in Ajmer. An eighty-year-old man, Hotusingh is one of four brothers who have an established grain-trading business in Ajmer. The brothers started the business together in the early 1950s, but now each has a separate shop run by his sons, expanding the family business to newer forms and size. Hotusingh has clear and fond memories of his early 'Sarkar' school in Sindh, and without noticing, he mentioned three teachers—Master Gangaram, Master Allah Rakhyo and Master Fateh Singh—from three different religions—Hinduism, Islam and Sikhism. To him they would all have been 'Sindhis'. Hotusingh identifies himself as a 'Nawabshahi Sardar' when regional difference has a social meaning, and simply as Sindhi or Sardar when it does not. In more particularised contexts, he may introduce himself as a Bandai Sikh.

In Sindh, his family dealt in livestock as its traditional business. Muslims worked for the family looking after the cattle, milking them and selling the milk. The family also owned land, but its cultivation was done by Muslims. Does Hotusingh remember playing with Muslim children, socialising with them? He replies: "Not really. *Acharvanyan ha ho*, we did not visit homes. But of course some of them who worked with my father would come home. There was no enmity or anything". At the time of Partition, Hotusingh was fourteen years old. Upon asking whether he had clear memories of Sindh, he said: "Of course I do. Each and every thing in Sindh. I thought I would go and visit Sindh. My passport is ready, but they will not give me a visa. We saw a lot during Partition, went through a lot of fear. We came by train, and they (government officials) threw us off at Luni station. They told us to go to Jodhpur. We could not settle down in Jodhpur. I did serve under somebody for six months, but it made no sense to do *naukri* (service) like that". When asked whether as Sikhs, he and his community in particular had gone through more fearful experiences than the Hindus did, Hotusingh related the fear associated with Collector Masud. In 1947, the Hindus and Sikhs of Nawabshah had faced the wrath of an irate collector named Masud. Remaining alive in the Partition memories of Sindhis, Masud was notorious for having wreaked havoc upon non-Muslims:

We were very scared of him, when we first realised we had to deal with him. Masud was from Lahore, and legends of his cruelty had begun to spread far and wide. But I do think he was not entirely to blame. He had lost his family at the hands of Punjabi Sardars, and the man was avenging the wrongdoing he had suffered. However, at that time all we knew was that our lives were in danger because we were Sardars, and nobody is going to make that distinction between us and the Punjabis. So violence did take place even in the case of Sindhi Sardars, but it was much less compared to the Punjabis, and more compared to the Vanya Sindhis.

A few months after Partition, a Muslim government official had warned the Sikhs of Nawabshah to leave as soon as they could by first going from Nawabshah to Hyderabad, and eventually

boarding a train from Mirpur Khas to India. About 300 Sikhs of Hotusingh's community and environs left by train to go to Hyderabad.

The Muslims servants began looting us, left, right and centre. They had been instigated to kill us. Masud had told all Muslims to not leave a single Sardar alive, but Sindhi Muslims were interested in looting, not killing. One of the servants twirled his axe at everybody, and dared anyone to touch us. He was very helpful to us. He used to call my father Mochi. He had got the news that the train we were to board was going to be 'cut' (i.e. its passengers would be massacred) so he frantically stopped my father from boarding. My father in turn made our community of Sindhi Sardars get down. The Punjabis did not get down. Later we found out that the train was indeed 'cut'.

"Being Sindhi, Being Sikh": Dayal Singh on Partition and After

The refugee colony of Pimpri near the city of Pune is one of the thirty settlements provided to the Sindhi community at the time of Partition. Over the years, well-to-do Sindhis have either moved out or have sought to buy and claim legal ownership over the houses they occupy. It is easy to forget that among the thousands of Sindhis living in Pimpri, some are also Sikhs. Like the Sikhs of Kubernagar (in Ahmedabad) discussed earlier, the Pimpri Sikhs' lives also overlap with the Hindus, and yet a distinct sense of being Sikh characterises many, especially a respondent named Dayal Singh. His Sindhi is peppered with English and Hindi, but, more importantly, is imbued with verses from the Guru Granth Sahib.



Gurdwara Sahib at Pune

Dayal Singh considers himself a representative voice of the Sindhi Sikhs, at least in the Pimpri Chinchwad areas of Maharashtra. Given his commitment to chronicling the community's growth (or lack of it), and mediating social events such as marriages and divorces, births and celebrations, it is quite likely that his self-perception is reinforced by the community's willingness to see him as a leader. A proud Sindhi Sikh in his mid-eighties, Dayal Singh feels strongly about his linguistic as well as his religious identity, which for him are inseparable. One among seven siblings, Dayal Singh is an example of *gurdinno*, a child 'given to the Guru'. He told us he is the first Sikh in his family: "My three sisters died unexpectedly, and my mother said, the next child will be given to the Guru, and he will be a Sikh. Luckily, I was the next born. The rest of my six siblings (three sisters, three brothers) are Hindus, but we all share the same strong belief in Shri Guru Granth Sahib". Dayal Singh was brought up as a Sikh, but his Hindu sisters were married to Sindhi Hindus. Dayal Singh raised his children as Sikhs and arranged for them to marry Sikh spouses. Having said that, however, Dayal Singh stated that there was little dividing the Hindus and Sikhs: "See, in 1947, in Pakistan there were just two categories, Muslim and non-Muslim, we belonged to the latter. As for the Hindus and Sikhs, we didn't know the difference. In Pakistan in our colony, 15 percent were Sindhi Hindus and Sikhs, the rest were Sindhi Muslims. We (Hindus and Sikhs) used to go to the same tikaana. An occasional visit of a Muslim neighbour was also not a surprise to us".

In the years of his youth in Dunho Bubur Loy in the Khairpur district of Sindh, Dayal Singh has distinct memories of the sprawling date farms his family owned. As was the case with most Sindhi Hindus and Sikhs, the farms were cultivated by Muslim *haaris*. At Partition, Dayal Singh's family received only Rs. 1,400 in exchange for its rice crop. He added: "Muslims knew that that was a pittance but there was little we could do about it. We were hearing stories about the violence wreaked upon the Sardars, so we had to leave somehow". Nevertheless, his family continued to believe that things would settle down and avoided making a decision about leaving

Sindh. However, "two days before we decided to leave Pakistan, a few Sindhi Sikh families were attacked and killed. That was an unavoidably alarming situation for us. We had to take a decision. And the violence was not just physical (but also verbal and emotional). Muslims started misbehaving with our sisters and daughters. They started harassing and abusing us. The more sure they became of their authority, the more insecure we were".

Fourteen-year-old Dayal Singh travelled from his village to the nearest city of Sukker in October 1947, from where he took a train to Karachi. He travelled disguised as a woman because the times were dangerous, especially for Sikhs. "My long hair helped me in this", he said laughing. From Karachi he boarded a steamer to the port of Bombay. After arriving in Bombay, many more locations followed; he moved from Bombay to Deolali Camp in Nashik, then to Ulhasnagar and eventually to Pimpri Camp where we met him. Dayal Singh has seven daughters and a son, and they are married and settled in Sindhi Sikh families. Having retired from his construction business, Dayal Singh devotes all his time to community service, especially connecting Sindhi Sikhs for matrimony. His disapproval of those who marry outside Sikhism is well known, and the Hindu-Sikh duality that characterised his own life and that of his siblings is perhaps not acceptable to him anymore. And yet it would be a simplification to assume that the religious identity of Sikhism now prevails entirely over the linguistic and cultural identity he shared through the years of Partition and afterwards. As we describe later, Sindhi Sikh families have divergent responses to identity in the post-Partition period.



Continuities and Reconfigurations

The four respondents cited above (Tej Kaur, Mehrwan Singh, Hotusingh and Dayal Singh) share the context of fear experienced on leaving Sindh, not merely as part of a non-Muslim minority, but particularly because they were Sikhs. At the same time, their narratives illustrate a die-hard spirit, an unsentimental view of a traumatic past, and a general refusal to dwell on that past. Towards the end of our last conversation with Mehrwan Singh, he told us: "Now I have a shop at Gandhi Road, Sadguru Electronics, and my sons are financially well settled. In fact one of my daughters lives in Dubai". In his narrative of success, Mehrwan Singh showed no bitterness at his own difficult journey to India and his reduction from landowner to wireman. A proud and fulfilled man, like many other Sindhi refugees, Mehrwan Singh refuses to carry bitter memories, instead rising from the ashes of Partition. A similar spirit characterised Hotusingh, who laughed when we asked him if he had thought back then of returning to his motherland: "*Arre, roti laye musibat huyi*. We had difficulty managing [to find] a meal. With only the clothes we had worn, where was the opportunity to look back? We received a claim (compensation) of only Rs. 7,000, but we had left so much behind. We sold our women's jewellery, and started selling grain by buying it at a low price and re-selling it". Of his brothers, Hotusingh proudly said: "*Sindh khan vadhik khush aahin* (They are happier here than they were in Sindh)". Happiness in this context was closer to prosperity than an abstraction. Hotusingh's narrative is illustrative of an immigrant community's urgent need to make ends meet.

Losing Faith after 1984

Another feature more pertinent to a post-Partition context is the turning away from the Congress. The Sindhi Sikhs exhibit a severe disillusionment with the Congress' violation of Harmandir Sahib in 1984, which led to the assassination of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and the backlash against the Sikh community. In Tej Kaur's interview, she displayed a continuing palpable fear because she had been a witness to the anti-Sikh pogrom of 1984. While Mehrwan Singh, Hotusingh and Dayal Singh also referred to 1984 in their interviews, their articulations of the historical moment were accompanied by disillusionment and anger towards the Congress. Mehrwan Singh told us: "After coming to India, I was busy earning my basics, but one change I do see between my days in Pakistan and here, which is that we trusted the Congress back there. However Indira Gandhi's decision to attack Harmandir Sahib played a role in breaking that bond". Dayal Singh echoed Mehrwan Singh's appreciation of the 'government' at

the time of resettlement in India and his later antagonism towards Congress: "It helped us with groceries and shelter for two years. Congress was good. In fact the BJP [Bharatiya Janata Party] did not even exist then. However 1984 ruined everything. We lost our people and faith in the government".

Apart from the shift in political affiliation, what are the other ways by which Sindhi Sikhs have redefined themselves? This question led us to ask our respondents whether their traditional ties with the Sindhi Hindus had remained the same after Partition, whether for instance they had continued doing business with the Sindhi Hindus? "Of course", replied Mehrwan Singh. "Since my workplace and home are both in Kubernagar it is only natural that I would. When we came to India, we were looking for camps where Sindhis were staying". Hotusingh expressed the same sentiments: "We find it easier adjusting with Sindhis. After all we speak Sindhi at home. And they are very flexible, they have so much faith in everything. Their attitude is *jenkhe khape tainkeh manyo* (believe what you will)". Dayal Singh agreed: "Sindhis, that is not a different community for us. We have been with them for years". Thus, the physical, cultural, linguistic and occupational ties shared by the Sindhi Sikhs and Sindhi Hindus continue at a certain level although there are shifts evident in the arena of marriage. The discussion below shows the beginning of tensions among the Sindhi Sikhs due to their need to maintain a distinct and linguistic Sindhi identity on the one hand, and the normative definition of a Punjabi Sikh that pulls them towards another, more religious, identity on the other. These shifts are emergent in nature, being not as clearly marked as the shift in political affiliation. However, they provide a glimpse into negotiations around Sindhi Sikh identity in post-Partition, contemporary India."

Reconciling Language and Religion

It would appear that language and religion are two discrete ingredients of identity. However, languages also come with claims of sacredness. The Punjabi language and the Gurmukhi script have come to represent the institutionalised nature of Sikhism in the twentieth century, the multilingual nature of the Guru Granth Sahib and its followers notwithstanding. The Guru Granth Sahib contains a mixture of several languages, including Persian, Urdu, Brajbhasha, Marwari and Marathi. The plurality of languages is matched by the Sikhs' plurality of caste, region and religion. However, the construction of Sikhism today has effected a synonymy between Punjab and Sikhism in the general perceptions of both Sikhs and others. A demographic

relationship between the language and people in Punjab has also played a role. For someone like Tej Kaur, who has lived in Amritsar all her life, there were compelling reasons for giving up Sindhi and speaking Punjabi instead: "We were told not to speak Sindhi. *Aap Sardar ho, Punjabi mein baat karo*, they told us'. 'Who said this?' we asked. 'Jats in Punjab". The contexts of power-sharing and political representation implicit in these definitions play a significant role in determining who is a legitimate Sikh and who is not.

The generation of respondents above seeks to retain its linguistic-cultural identity of being Sindhis without compromising the Sikh religion. Inasmuch as this involves knowing the Gurbani and committing to memory parts of the Guru Granth Sahib, Sindhi Sikhs acquire knowledge of the Gurmukhi script with great felicity and also speak and understand Punjabi. Hotusingh referred to this as a recent phenomenon, saying: "Now we can speak Punjabi as well. *Haane galayein vathun ta*". However, his generation also finds a highly emotive charge in their mother tongue, Sindhi. Mehrwan Singh's words, "*Sindhi ta pahenji bhaasha aaah*e (Sindhi is, after all, our 'own' language)," and Dayal Singh's assertion that his family prefers to intermarry with Sindhi Sardars, "otherwise who will remember this sweet language", point to language as an important source of identity and memory. In the event of our respondents being unable to achieve this balance, in other words being unable to find grooms and brides within the Sindhi Sikh community, we asked them if they would consider marrying their children to Punjabi Sikhs or Sindhi Hindus. The answers were quite telling; we quote Dayal Singh as a representative voice: "The Punjabis think they are superior to us, probably they are. I see my granddaughters following 'their' culture. Sindhi Sardars are peaceful and simple.... Punjabis are more violent, abusive, and show-offs". However, if forced to choose between a Punjabi Sikh and a Sindhi Hindu, he responded after a meaningful pause: "Punjabi Sikh. Because Sindhis are not Sikhs".

Through social and occupational transactions, the Sindhi Sikhs (at least of the generation we interviewed) continue to be members of a larger linguistic identity; however, there are forces of homogenisation of their religious identity that are pushing them in another direction. Marriages and procreation rites increasingly lean towards 'Punjabification', so that the good tidings of an engagement are announced by Sikh greetings such as '*Bole so Nihal*' ('Whoever utters shall be happy') popularised by Guru Gobind Singh and denoting religious fervour among Sikhs. Moreover, Sindhi *laadas* (folk songs) are tending to be replaced by Punjabi folk

songs. These examples from the post-Partition generation represent a tiny, but significant, linguistic-cultural shift in the Sindhi Sikh identity. This phenomenon is so far only a trend, and is not backed in this article with methodological inquiry.

Based on our more systematic observations of the Partition generation, we believe they have, by and large, fond memories of being Sindhi in Sindh and practising Sikhism as a religion shared with Sindhi Hindus. The bonds of language, neighbourhood, occupation and history between Sindhi Sikhs and Sindhi Hindus continued through the refugee camps and post-Partition lives. And, yet, it is true that the Sindhi Sikhs faced more challenges in making a safe departure from Sindh. It is also true that both Hindus as well as Sikhs have had to tailor their religious identities to align with textualised versions of their religions. Partition is an important (albeit not exclusive) context to such forms of redefinition.

Re-alignment of Identity

So we asked whether the Sindhi Sikhs' experiences of displacement, exile and rehabilitation were similar to those of other refugees from Sindh. Were their negotiations with citizenship different from those of Sindhi Hindus, who strained to assimilate themselves into mainstream versions of Hinduism? Has the rupture between region and language effected by Partition contributed to fragmentation, ambivalence or a re-alignment of identity among Sindhi Sikhs? From our encounters with the Sindhi Sikhs' memories of Sindh, their narratives of departure from Sindh and arrival into India, we suggest that the archive of Partition is both enriched by new knowledge and supported by observations made earlier on the Sindhi experience of Partition.

The Sikh element among the Sindhi migrants shows that while Sindh did not witness the intensity of physical violence that Punjab experienced, the Sikhs in Sindh felt more vulnerable than the Hindus. The Sindhi Sikhs' experience of resettlement and challenges of starting life anew are not markedly different when compared with their counterparts amongst the Sindhi Hindus. The unsentimental outlook that made Sindhi Hindus simply get on with life without dwelling upon the past is also a feature of the Sindhi Sikhs' experience of post-Partition resettlement. However, it is in the arena of religion that we find divergence. We observe that just as Sindhi Hindus found it culturally and psychologically imperative to adopt textual and mainstream versions of Hinduism after Partition, Sindhi Sikhs were pulled in the direction of mainstream Sikhism identified with the



Punjab region. The nature of negotiation, and the respective consequences, may be different, but are beyond the scope of this paper.

And finally, identities are experienced locally and contextually. The generation aged in its twenties and thirties may find their 'Sindhi' identity more relevant in some contexts than their 'Sikh' identity. And if the constant questions about who is a Sindhi Sikh become tiresome, it may just be easier to appear to be a Punjabi- or Hindi-speaking Sikh. However, it is important for us to know that it does not have to be and was not, historically, only one or the other identity. It is possible to imagine other permutations and combinations in such a situation. For instance, substituting 'Sikh' with 'Muslim' or 'Sindhi' with 'Bangla' might also throw light on

another set of ruptures and classifications that characterise twentieth-century identity formation in South Asia. Practices of 'seeing' others acquire an imperceptible grammar. Whether all such classifications that take 'more' or 'less' bits of people's lived realities produce exclusion is not the point; rather, they point to the limits of language that often fail to keep pace with, as it were, spillover effects of identity. Partition and its attendant events, or rather the making of nations and the attendant divisions, has reconfigured identity formation in India. With movements occurring along the lines of region, nation and religion, ruptures have come to characterise certain relationships.

Rita Kothari & Jasbirkaur Thadhani

Extracted from *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*,

From Karachi to Bombay to London

Dr. Kartar Singh Lalvani, the multi-faceted Achiever



When Dr Kartar S. Lalvani founded Vitabiotics in London in 1971, it was the UK's only specialist vitamin supplement company. Today, the company produces a range of well-known brands, including Wellwoman and Omega-H3, which treat everything from mouth ulcers to menopause. The global Vitabiotics Group turns over about US\$371m a year and is driven by Lalvani and his son, Tej. But it wasn't always plain sailing for the enthusiastic and modest Sikh businessman. Indeed, the company's roots were in adversity.

Dr Kartar Lalvani was born to a Sindhi-Sikh family, in Karachi in 1931. His father was a successful pharmacist and the family lived comfortably. But in 1947, the partition of India forced them to move to Bombay, where they had to re-start their lives over from nothing. Lalvani recalls it as a devastating period in his life. Aged just 16, he had to leave his secure, contented life and move to an unknown city more than 500 miles away.

In retrospect, he says that this period of turmoil was the making of him. "Without partition, perhaps my brothers and I would not have been so entrepreneurial," he says. "But because we witnessed my father losing everything, it made us determined that such a thing would not happen to us." This fear of failure is what drove him on in the early days and it still does, despite Vitabiotics' current success and his own personal wealth.

Eventually, Kartar Singh Lalvani followed in his father's footsteps and studied pharmaceutical science in London, Germany and India. But it took more than a good knowledge of the subject to succeed in the

pharmaceutical sector. It was the way he applied himself to his studies, to research and then to setting up and growing the business that really made the difference.

Lalvani arrived in London in April 1956 at the end of one of the coldest winters on record. He threw himself into his studies and completed a postgraduate degree in pharmacy at King's College London. Then came a doctorate in medical chemistry at Bonn University in West Germany.

No pain, no gain But it was a personal issue that led Lalvani into business. At that time, he suffered from mouth ulcers and had failed to find a treatment on the market that worked for him. They might alleviate the immediate pain, but they didn't cure the problem.

So, using a combination of vitamin C and powder taken from a diarrhea tablet, Lalvani managed to treat his condition successfully. The product, called Oralcer, would be the first in his new business's pipeline. By then, it was 1971 – and it was also where the hard work started.

Hard times at the beginning

There were not many young Sikh entrepreneurs in London in the 1970s, and Lalvani found it difficult to get his ulcer treatment on the shelves of the larger high-street chemists, such as Boots. He then approached the UK's larger pharmaceutical companies, hoping to license his formula, but they too chose not to work with him.

So convinced was he that his product worked that he set up his own company, Vitabiotics. Having spent all his savings on patenting the product, however, there wasn't enough money to launch it with much fanfare. So he began to visit individual pharmacies personally. While this approach also proved fruitless – he only managed to sell £5 worth of Oralcer – Lalvani learned a valuable lesson about getting knocked back and having answers for any questions or concerns that were thrown at him.

Perhaps just as important as Lalvani's persistence and determination was the degree to which he was prepared to make sacrifices. He worked harder and offered a better level of service than anyone else – and learned to live on a meager budget. "I was always overworked," he says, "but happily overworked. I'd work 17 hours a day but be happy doing it."

This was just as well as, in addition to trying to get Oralcer to market, Lalvani was working on his next product, a multivitamin called Omega H-3. He had also taken on his first employee and was taking his first steps into marketing and PR activity. It was with Omega H-3 that Lalvani got his first big break – but it didn't come through UK sales.

Making the Fortune

With Vitabiotics turning over hundreds of million dollars a year and Kartar Lalvani himself said to be worth £100m, you might think that would be enough success for one family. But business obviously runs in its blood. Lalvani's brothers, Gulu and Partap, founded Binatone, which imports and distributes consumer electronics. In the 1980s, they opened offices in Spain,

Japan, South Korea, Hong Kong, India, Nigeria and Taiwan. In 1989 the company was divided, with Gulu (now Chairman of Binatone Electronics International) retaining the European and Hong Kong businesses and Partap (now Chairman of Binatone Industries) retaining the group's businesses in Eastern Europe, Africa and South Asia. Their sister, Bina, after whom Binatone was named, is a successful fashion designer in India. Kartar's daughter is studying for a law degree and his niece, Divia Lalvani, co-owns the successful London restaurant Zuma. Kartar's other son, Ajit, is a professor at Imperial College, London, and a leading tuberculosis specialist. In October, the Royal College of Physicians honoured his research into the development of new tools for treatment and control of TB with the prestigious Weber-Parkes Trust Medal. He has developed a new test that is, according to the judges, "the first significant advance on the century-old tuberculin skin-prick test and is significantly faster and more accurate".

Lalvani's brothers, Gulu and Partap, were also forging entrepreneurial careers. Partap was working in Nigeria, so Lalvani tried Omega H-3 there and it was a success. It was the impetus Vitabiotics needed.

No support from the Banks

But just when the time seemed right to expand, Lalvani hit a stumbling block common to all entrepreneurs: access to finance. Developing pharmaceutical products and setting up a new business isn't cheap, but the banks wouldn't lend to him. In fact, despite having had an account with the same bank since 1957, it wouldn't give him a loan. While this frustrated the rate at which Vitabiotics could grow, Lalvani says the experience forced him to focus, concentrate on value for money and approach expansion and investment with caution.

Today, Vitabiotics exports to more than 100 countries and has 20 UK brands, eight of which are number one in their markets. It employs 2,200 people and has factories and offices in six countries. Lalvani may have struggled to find funding at first, but turnover is now



Dr. Kartar T Lalvani conferred Master Entrepreneur Award

Dr Kartar Lalvani, President of Vitabiotics, was conferred the world's most prestigious 'Master Entrepreneur Award' 2008 at the Ernst & Young Annual Awards Ceremony. The coveted award stands as a testimony to the invaluable contribution of Dr. Lalvani in the field of healthcare. The founder of Britain's first specialist supplement company has redefined the lifestyles of people with his well-researched healthcare and wellbeing products. Today, 'Vitabiotics Wellbeing', selling a legion of health products, is Britain's leading and fastest growing major nutraceutical company specialising in effective solutions for specific therapeutic areas, introducing wholly new concepts in nutrient therapy. One of the most reputed entrepreneurs in UK, Dr Lalvani is a known philanthropist, he is a generous donor to needy institutions and to charity.

about US\$371m a year, with UK sales making up about 25% of that total.

These days, Lalvani works in partnership with his son Tej. The pair, along with Vitabiotics' Vice President and Marketing Director Robert Taylor, plan the future growth strategy of the company.

While Tej accepts that it is very much his father's company, both father and son see the relationship as positive and say they have no difficulties separating business and family life. And both hasten to add that it wasn't a case of Tej being given a senior position at Vitabiotics just because his father was the founder.

"I started out driving forklift trucks in a warehouse," says Tej. "But I wanted to do it that way – it is important to understand how all the different parts of the business operate and to see how important each part is."

Sans borders

As Lalvani prefers to be based in the UK, it's down to Tej to lead the global business development of Vitabiotics. It is a busy period in the firm's history: it is building a new factory in Egypt, acquiring a manufacturing plant in Indonesia and looking to significantly expand its US presence. "We look at the demographics of a country, the economic fundamentals, and generally start in a new territory by working with a distributor and going from there," says Tej. "If sales are strong, we then think about working with local partners or going into the country

ourselves. For example, we are strong in Nigeria and India and we are looking to expand into Russia."

But true to form, the team is cautious when it comes to doing deals and making investments in new markets. "It's been too easy to borrow money but then but then spend it in the wrong way," says Tej. "For us, it is about negotiating better deals, asking constantly for a better price and keeping on top of all costs at all times."

But your business is only as good your products, and they certainly seem to be working for Lalvani. He may be 76, but he looks far younger and says he feels like he is 35. There is no denying the sparkle in his eyes and his palpable enthusiasm for his products. When he gives a demonstration of Vitabiotics' new anti-wrinkle cream, it is clear he is excited about the potential of this product, which has been 16 years in the making.

Indeed, Lalvani shows no signs of slowing down. He has just opened Indali Lounge, an Indian restaurant in London offering food based on the same approach he takes to his medicines – all natural, he says, and better for you than the usual ghee-based Indian cuisine. He has also just finished a book on India's colonial history.

While it has been a long, hard journey, Kartar Singh Lalvani is fairly sanguine about what he had to go through to make his business a success. "I always had a vision, from a young age, that I would achieve something that helped other people," he says. "And I have."

Dr Kartar Lalvani: the Author

Dr Lalvani's long-standing keen interest in history had since 2003 stimulated him to research and author a unique book featuring for the first time, the lesser-known other side of the last 100 years of Britain's two centuries of colonial rule in India. This book narrates the great industrial, civil and social reforms with educational and welfare progress besides the all-important massive industrial and administrative infrastructure provided in the 19th and 20th century India, with much of the early hardware having been transported from 12,000 sailing miles away via the Cape of Good Hope. In the year 1947, Britain left behind the world's largest and sustainable democracy, with some great institutions like a unified world class Indian army besides an excellent Indian civil service with impeccable judiciary, Parliament and the legacy of good governance. This factual and illustrated account in 400 pages, with 22 chapters, titled *The Making of India* was published in the second half of 2008.

Dr Lalvani has actively supported the National Literacy Trust for several years and the Commonwealth Education Fund. He has also committed himself since the last 14 years to the *Duke of Edinburgh Award World Fellowship* developing young people with like skills internationally. Vitabiotics sponsored the School of Integrated Medicine at Westminster University including the annual lecture as well as prizes for the Nutritional therapy course, funding for their staff attendance at international conferences and sponsorship of Polyclinic seminars.

Dr Kartar Lalvani's commitment to social justice across all ethnic divides was demonstrated by his underwriting the costs for the aerial search for young Joel Kitchen, a British citizen who was lost while paragliding in North India. After reading about the family plight, Lalvani paid for his parents return flight to India and funded a private aerial search in the Himalayas. The news about this spontaneous initiative helped to stimulate Indian participation in the mountain search. Dr Lalvani also enjoys reading, cooking, photography and alpine walking.

[See Next]

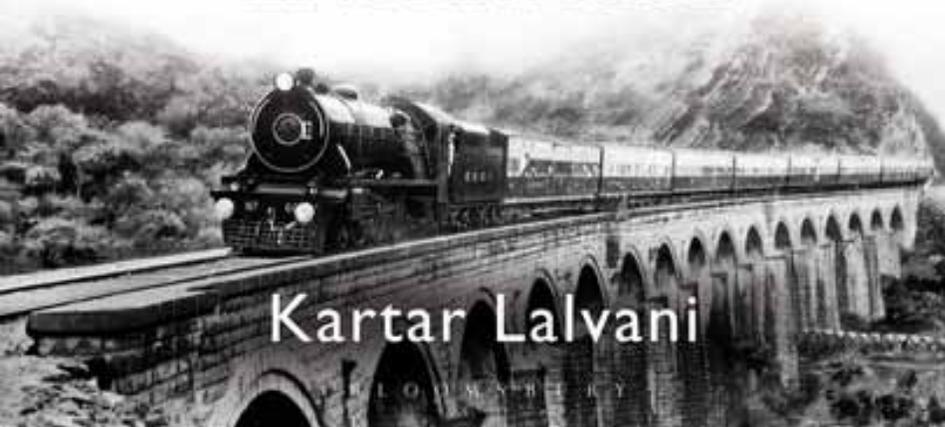
Extracted from Sindhishaan: Voice of the Sindhis

The Outspoken and Bold views of Dr Kartar S Lalvani in his seminal book.



THE MAKING OF INDIA

THE **UNTOLD** STORY OF
BRITISH
ENTERPRISE



Kartar Lalvani

In his debut book, *The Making of India: The Untold Story of British Enterprise*, the multi-dimensional achiever and author, Dr Kartar Singh Lalvani presents a fresh perspective at the pioneers who created the infrastructure of our great nation, India. Dr Lalvani presents the first exploration of Britain's colonial contribution to the nation's building in a single volume. The book explores how the first pioneers used girders for more than 100,000 bridges, track for 45,000 miles of railway and heavy machinery to physically build the world's largest democracy. Detailed descriptions of establishment of trade links to the creation of the judiciary, universities, museums and libraries are offered in chapters on the roads, railways and seas and the British engineering feats which remain unparalleled even till today are recalled. In the Preface, Dr Kartar Singh Lalvani states that it is "Time to Recognise the Positive Side of the Imperial Coin: Setting the Record Straight".

Had I been old enough to have been an adult during the last decades of British rule, I, too, would have joined the struggle for independence; the impulse towards freedom is a logical and appropriate response to external rule. However, well over half a century after Independence, with the benefit of hindsight, are we not obliged to look back dispassionately and objectively in an attempt to recognise the lasting legacy we inherited and to give credit where credit is due?

Of course, the British also benefited in innumerable ways and, yes, some

undoubtedly took unfair advantage of their unique position of power, more so during the period of the East India Company rule. **All of that and more has been amply described in several books on colonial history, most of which were written by the British themselves, and none of it is contested here.**

There were, however, two sides to British rule: one was commercial and at times exploitative, particularly under the early rule of the East India Company, a private trading monopoly; the other was liberal and that liberalism was high minded and enduring in its benefaction, with a legacy and feats of public works that remain unparalleled today. Such liberalism meshed with the deep roots of Indian culture that is peaceful and harmonious.

I am a product of that Indo-British culture which developed during the long years of British rule in India and has continued to evolve thereafter in Britain and India in recent decades. I came to England in 1956 for my postgraduate studies in pharmacy in London, followed by a doctorate in medicinal chemistry at the University of Bonn. I have imbibed and inherited values that people of both nations have cherished. I feel equally at home in both countries and love them both equally and passionately - a patriotic Brit while also very much Indian - and hence the reason for my taking on this challenge of writing about a subject which has been my passion for the past several decades.

In my view - now belonging to the generation after Independence - it is time that we put the once-necessary rhetoric politicians used to build a new nation to one side and, on the grounds of fairness and historical accuracy, acknowledge the positive aspects of the colonial period. By doing so, we can incorporate a balanced portrayal of both sides of the imperial coin and bring perspective to the shared history of these two great nations not only in our thinking but also in school curricula. This new clarity would help to build better understanding, lasting harmony and mutual respect in a troubled world, and rebuild an important international and mutually beneficial relationship between Britain and India for generations to come.

In 2007 the eminent writer and businessman Jaithirth Rao wrote: 'The British gave us a sense of our past ... they mapped our country, analysed and described it in memorable prose.' Yet, my fear is that we are slipping into a collective amnesia of our history, leading older generations to lament whether or not things were better under the British and the younger generations to view the British as plunderers who brought India to its knees. A middle ground is needed to avoid falling

into a despondency when it comes to the urgency of the colossal social and economic problems India faces today of widespread inequality and poverty. There is a danger that some of our modern-day leaders and opinion-makers are leaning too much on this political expediency to avoid the uncomfortable question of why there remains in India so much widespread poverty and inequality. One of the things Britain did not introduce to India was corruption, even though the East India Company did indeed benefit from the widely prevailing corrupt practices already rampant in the subcontinent.

I would like to state simply that although there were wrongs committed by the British against India; as widely recognised by the British themselves, there is much more that was and remains fair and positive. My overarching aim in writing the book is not only to set the record straight but also to help foster good modern-day relations based on partnership, equality and friendship without the baggage of a purely negative and wasteful interpretation of history but instead with a recognition that the historical record does actually contain the seeds of a harmonious future Indo-British cooperation. We should have a relationship not based on suspicion and the weight of inaccurate opinion, but rather based on the realities of the relationship: with the over-arching goodwill, dedication and commitment, which were the mark of the pioneers of the Raj.

It continues to sadden me that even when I speak to my British compatriots there is an uncomfortable reluctance to speak of British rule in India or to acknowledge the many positive aspects of the shared history. This reticence, shame and misunderstanding of our past is something I dearly wish to move beyond so we can forge honest and open relations and mutual opportunity. In 55 years, I have not heard of one single Briton speak about the positive legacy of British rule in India; so, it was a long-awaited relief to hear of one courageous man who spoke honestly in the face of criticism. When the British Prime Minister David Cameron was posed the question of whether he was proud of Britain's colonial history, he answered truthfully: 'There is an enormous amount to be proud of in what the British Empire did ... there were bad events as well as good events and the bad events we should learn from and the good events we should celebrate'.

It is my deepest hope that in the coming years the power of India's cherished democracy will be harnessed to lift the country's poorest 40% out of abject poverty and illiteracy into a state of health, dignity and

freedom from hunger. Having speculated on how the fragmented, deeply divided and weak subcontinent might have developed were it not for the unifying effect of the Raj, or had the British been supplanted by other colonial powers such as those already with a base in India - the Portuguese or French - one can appreciate more deeply the benefits conferred on India by the unique 200-year-long relationship with Britain. Both France and Portugal had mixed reputations where their colonial administration was concerned, with their handing back of power most often acrimonious and bloody affairs.

The attitude of the British towards Indians with their deeply rooted liberal tradition was in fact much better and as is often said to have been fair though it may not have been always welcome. No one can be in a better position to compare or appreciate this than Indians themselves, having experienced many barbarous invasions in the pre-British era. Of these the most devastating being the Persian (which robbed Delhi of the world's finest collection of jewels, including the famous Koh-i-noor diamond -later retrieved by the Sikh kingdom of the Punjab) and then the successive Afghan invasions, which saw the looting, pillaging and the entire emptying of the most prosperous Delhi and its neighbouring north-western regions of the then Punjab and Kashmir, with the cities of Lahore and Agra also devastated and emptied by the raiding armies while the British were still confined to Bengal about 1000 miles away.

During the long innings of British rule in India, only one period was particularly imperialistic and I tend to believe that it had something to do with the rise of militant nationalism. Commentators have referred to the reforming British influence on 18- and 19th-century Indian society. The suggestion being that the British showed, by their own example, reasonable 'limits' in their governance, which in turn set the dos and don'ts in society. It was given to the British to explain that personal liberty comes with social responsibility. Restraint, moderation, temperance, discretion and such other values, to me at least, are direct influences of the British.

The wealth of archived information on the development of the huge infrastructure in a country with a quarter of the world's population in the 19th and 20th centuries is extraordinary and a testimony to the painstaking and systematic documentation carried out by the Raj's officers and archivists for posterity. Dormant and accumulated files filled with documents and photographs, covered in 200 years of archive dust, in Britain's libraries and engineering institutions

- especially the revered Institution of Civil Engineers (ICE) in London - provide many fascinating yet little-known stories of the many challenging individual projects of enterprise, audacity and adventure. The object of this book is to distil the essence of this unparalleled episode of trans global nation-building and capture the spirit of Britain's unsung, yet heroic, pioneers in India, rather than to give a detailed account of every aspect of Britain's legacy in India.

Given the wealth of valuable original information that I found waiting to be uncovered during my research, it is surprising that the many positive aspects of colonial rule have remained hitherto untold. As a British Indian, it gives me great pride to give due recognition to the positive side of the imperial coin, which I discovered to be so much stronger and greater than widely acknowledged, compressed in a single volume of 432 pages. The book I envisaged and planned with the help of my friend and contributor, a retired British railway engineer, the late Peter English, who died in 2007, was to detail how this great British enterprise and its contributions in the 19th and 20th centuries helped to create a unified India, out of multi-cultural multi-linguistic and divided regions of the vast Indian subcontinent.

This book is a long-overdue recognition of the effort and ingenuity of those courageous pioneers who have so often, and so wrongly, been derided as no more than corrupt plunderers bent on pillaging the wealth of the people and the land they conquered. The practicalities of publishing a single volume meant vast amounts of valuable material sadly had to be left out of this book which, despite its length, is just a glimpse of the awe-inspiring endeavour of those early British pioneers. It is my hope that someone else will be able to take up the challenge of producing an exhaustive work, inevitably running into many volumes.

Although I am a scientist, the subject of Indian history has always fascinated me; should any paragraph appear to be dogmatic or contentious, it is purely a result of my attempt, as a scientist, to condense a large amount of facts and information and over 200 years of history into a succinct overview, and in this regard I respectfully request the reader's forgiveness. I would humbly request the reader to read with an open mind and form their own considered opinion. The detail in 22 succinct chapters is the culmination of my devotion and over a decade's research, and I hope provides ample evidence to bring to light the under-appreciated reality that, in almost every walk of life, Great Britain has made a significant contribution to **The Making of India.**

The Whole Truth

Many Indian patriots may not like to hear or read that an Indian, though today domiciled in the UK, should publicly confess that Indians should be grateful for some of the valuable, almost colossal, benefits that British rule bestowed on India. The fear is genuine and I am almost sure that such patriots exist in very large numbers.

False conceit often trumps unpleasant truth. A highly educated author belonging to the brave Sikh community should without the slightest hesitation publish and declare the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. Loyalty to history cannot be diluted by an irrational fear. The author's impeccable reputation as a renowned inventor, research scientist and humble philanthropist guarantees that no sensible person will suspect any fly in the ointment. Dr Lalvani is no sycophant nor buyable with material reward. Besides I fully concur with him that Indians should be grateful for some of the permanent blessings of colonial rule, which only the unique attributes of the British could have conferred on us.

India and Pakistan are the heirs of the Indus Civilisation (also known as the Harappan Civilisation), which flourished in our part of the world more than 5000 years before the birth of Christ. Europe had long and fondly believed history had started with the Greeks and that India was a dark continent inhabited by barbarians until their civilised cousins, the Aryans, brought to them the light of civilization. This insolence was shattered in 1924 by the breathtaking discoveries of the Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro cities. The excavations headed by the British archaeologist Sir John Marshall indisputably established that during the third and fourth millennia BC there existed in India very highly developed cities, housed with wells and bathrooms, elaborate drainage systems, and a general condition of citizens superior to that prevailing in contemporary Babylonia and Egypt. There was much more to make India proud but I must skip the temptation to beat my own drum.

As civilisations mature and ebb, humans become weak and sometimes indifferent to the external affairs of this world. These brave ancestors of ours met Alexander, the Macedonian Emperor, on the banks of the Indus. The story goes that they laughed hysterically when he told them about his plans of world conquest. By ridicule and strength, they

persuaded him to abandon his foolish plan and return to his native place. But they did give him a glimpse of their spiritual life. Even so, India continued its decline into debilitating indifference to the world around it. Foreign invaders and plunderers took advantage and continued to pour into India: Mohammed bin Kasim in the 8th century, followed later by Mahmud Ghaznavi, Mohammed Ghori of Afghanistan (who defeated mighty Delhi), the Lodhis, the Mughals, and the later Persian and Afghan invasions of the 18th century which entirely emptied Delhi.

By the 16th century, India was part of the Mughal Empire, a dynasty that gave us the magnificent early emperors Akbar the Great and Shah Jahan the Magnificent. They became respectable Indians and ruled justly, earning the respect of their subjects. Unfortunately their descendants turned out to be religious fanatics and forfeited the respect and loyalty of their subjects. But the dynasty left remarkable architecture including the famous Taj Mahal, local industry and exports.

The British had ventured into India during the regime of Emperor Akbar, initially, of course, as traders. By the early 18th century, we were so helpless, emaciated and corrupt that a British mercantile company called the East India Company was almost a sovereign power. These men had strong physiques, the benefit of scientific discoveries and the dawn of the industrial revolution, and superior education and weapons of war.

Yes, like all colonial powers, even Britain practised economic exploitation, but in the process conferred large benefits on us. The British ruled us, but surely they rescued the majority of Indians from the hated jizya tax, which was payable by all non-Muslims, converting them into degraded and inferior serfs of sort. Let us not also forget that it was the British and an East India Company man that abolished sati. They also resurrected our heritage, restoring the wastelands of Agra and its neglected Taj Mahal, and much more, to their former glory.

History of this crazy world is a long story of changes in every aspect of human life: the rise and fall of ruling dynasties, ever-changing ethical and religious beliefs, periods of peace and growth, new discoveries of science, and war, famine and destruction – vast changes between prosperity and penury.

The Europeans had developed a new outlook of respect for India within a few decades. India was making a strong claim to self-rule and political independence. Dr Lalvani has good cause to be appreciative of the great good the British connection has brought to us. They prepared us for self-rule and finally made a graceful exit.

Even in the period of British parliamentary rule, when democracy and a secular Constitution for free India was still a distant dream, the education of leaders such as Gandhiji and Jawaharlal Nehru in British universities had created a longing for democracy, rule of law, an independent judiciary to make the weak prevail against the strong, the elimination of religious fanaticism and hatred, and a life guided wholly by reason and logic but inspired by love and compassion. Our new Constitution of free India copied the British model of governance. Debates in our Constituent Assembly testify to this finest gift for which we do owe to the British a great deal of appreciation and gratitude.

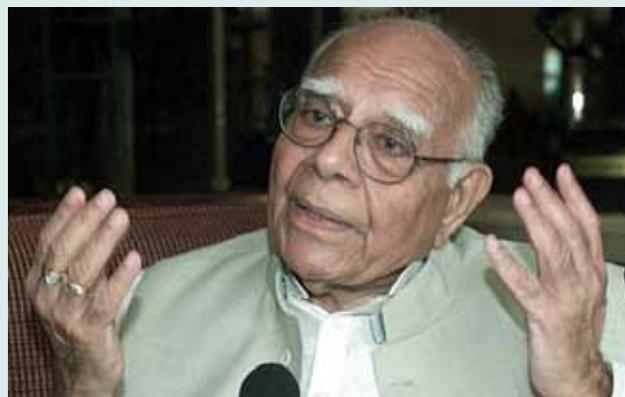
Even before the discovery of the ancient Harappa Civilisation, the West had discovered in Swami Vivekananda an amazing Indian philosopher, with very few to rival him in his intellectual attainments. He attempted to combine Indian spirituality with Western materialism and became the main force behind the Vedanta movement in the West. The West has not forgotten his speech at the World Parliament of Religions in Chicago, Illinois, in September 1893. Years before the amazing Harappa discoveries, and right in their own country, he attacked the American attitude of contempt for the Blacks and their praise for the Whites. The Americans learnt a lot from what this great Indian said to them. India rose in the esteem of our rulers, too, and I am almost sure that after the first quarter of the 20th century was over the British had decided that their rule was to end soon and a new era of mutual respect and cooperation would begin. The heirs of Harappa can't remain slaves. The peaceful transformation of the next quarter of the century is proof of British grace and goodwill.

While I write this, it is impossible to ignore the great British theosophist Dr Annie Besant who was a scholar of the Hindu Shastras and accepted as an axiom for life the shastric principle Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam, meaning 'the whole world is my family'. Besant wrote and lectured on Hinduism. She was a poet, an excellent orator and a versatile tornado of power and passion. She loved India, became a political leader, and in her speech in South India at the first student conference of the Home Rule

League in June 1916 she advised the students to get ready to be the leaders of India by mastering history, logic and political economy. Besant obviously had a strong intuition that British Rule was coming to an end and India deserved its freedom. It is equally impossible to ignore the contribution of the architect of the Indian National Congress, the retired Indian Civil Service officer Allan Octavian Hume.

While coming to the end of writing this foreword, I remind myself that I am the country's oldest practising lawyer and teacher of law. I can't resist citing judicial precedents to support my views. When our Constituent Assembly was drafting the new Constitution of free India we doubtless had decided to copy a Westminster model of democracy. We created a Council of Ministers to aid and advise the President but we forgot to provide in express terms that the President of India will normally be bound by it. This lacuna, somewhat serious in a written and detailed constitution, was noticed only after about a quarter of a century after the Constitution came into force in 1950. The void was later filled by a judgement of the Supreme Court of India. One of our finest judges, Justice Krishna Iyer, in his inimitable style wrote: 'Not the Potomac but the Thames fertilizes the flow of the Yamuna, if we may adopt a riverine imagery. In this thesis we are fortified by the precedent of this Court, strengthened by the Constituent Assembly proceedings and reinforced by the actual working of the organ involved for about a "silver jubilee span of time".' Thus was laid the rule that the President of India is as much bound by ministerial advice as the British monarch.

Dr Lalvani is on the right track.



Foreword to the book penned by Professor Ram Jethmalani, MP and Advocate in the Supreme Court of India Former Cabinet Minister of Law, in which he opines:

1984: Institutionalising Evil



Much has been written on the pogrom of 1984 and the wretched aftermath where a callous administration simply tried to sweep away the horrific memories. This piece thus focuses on some terms and concepts that are critical to the issue and are not yet a part of our lexicon or conversation.

Humans are not the only species with a moral sense but perhaps no other species has such an exquisitely honed ethical take on what they will or will not do. No other species spends billions every year around the world to prevent cruelty to other species; yet, none can outdo mankind in devising systems to destroy others as effectively either. The “other” in this could even be one of our own as we show little sympathy to our own species. In this our behaviour can be either glorious or

gory to the extreme; we can climb the heights of divinity and also plumb to the depths of depravity.

An overview of the situation that Sikhs in India find themselves today is necessary. Sikhs are a relatively small minority, less than 2 percent, about 25 million of India’s billion plus people. This young religion, just over 500 years old, has its way of life clearly defined and rejects for instance, a rigidly defined caste system, while propagating an equal place for women in society. Sikhi does not insist on exclusivity of dogma or doctrine and speaks of one Creator common to all creation regardless of nationality, gender, race, class, caste, or religious label.

Because of the clarity of their message, this small minority has carved a special niche in India and its recent history. During the defining struggle for India’s independence from the British in the mid 20th century, more than two-thirds of all those who were sentenced to life imprisonment or death by the British were Sikhs. At the same time, a large proportion of soldiers of the British Indian Army were Sikhs, and the memorials in Europe, Africa and South Asia bear ample testimony to their valour. Half a century later, Sikhs are a worldwide presence today.

The Punjabi (largely Sikh) farmer has been mainly responsible for rescuing India from its yearly famines, and the Sikh soldiers for preserving its integrity during its many wars with its neighbours. Yet, soon after independence from the British, the political vision of the nominally democratic, new nation, India, was compromised to the new realities of a numerically dominant Hindu majority. And Sikhs lost their place as a forceful and independent voice. The Constitution of the new nation defined Sikhs as ‘Hindus’ for legal purposes, an anomaly that persists till today, even after 68 years and despite continued protests.

But this is not the place for the gamut of political-economic issues that could have been easily resolved given a modicum of commonsense and a view of belonging together as members of the same secular nation. The majoritarian structure found it more convenient occasionally to brand Sikhs as ‘anti-India’ and reframe any differences as treason. Their tools:

vilification and historical amnesia.

I concede that my brief summary does no justice at all to the Sikh grievances or the government's handling of them over the years but that is not my mandate today. Readers can explore the events in excruciatingly painful detail at many Internet sites, particularly Sikhnet.com, Sikhchic.com, Ensaaf, Sikh for Justice, and the others.

I dwell instead on how the crisis was managed and what it means to us today. In a clearly political strategy after 1984, Sikhs were sidelined as "anti-national". In June 1984, the premier Sikh place of worship, the Golden Temple, was attacked on a holy day, when thousands of men, women and children, pilgrims who had come to pay obeisance at the shrine, were caught in the crossfire and killed, or arrested without trial. This, sealed the state of Punjab from the rest of the country.

Five months later in retaliation, the Prime Minister was shot dead by two of her Sikh bodyguards. That immediately led to a time of utter darkness that lies at the heart of a festering issue today 32 years later. Within hours of the death of Indira Gandhi, truckloads of armed mobs appeared in Sikh neighbourhoods of India's capital city, Delhi, and several other cities of India. They systematically and selectively looted Sikh businesses and houses, burned, raped and murdered thousands of unarmed innocent civilians.

The mayhem continued for three days. The police were not there or stood by, some even egging on the killers. The military were kept in the barracks and deliberately not deployed for 72 hours. The political leadership never once appealed for calm; but perhaps provoked more killings. Absolutely no one was arrested during that time; no police cases registered.

Now, remember that 32 years ago we were in pre-Google times. There was no way to download lists of Sikh-owned houses and businesses at the click of a button; yet, the mobs carried such lists. Trucks and petrol were not freely available nor were arms and guns and they had to be registered. Yet, the mobs came in trucks with guns, machetes, and kerosene within six hours in Delhi and in many cities across the country.

They did what they were assigned to do but three days later, the murderous frenzy stopped as if at the behest of an unseen hand of the Commander. Neither India's civilian bureaucracy nor its professional army has ever shown such precise organisational competence and management skills before - or since 1984.

The press and state owned television instantly labeled the killings as "riots", a deliberate debasement of language. "Riots" are marked by spontaneity and a

lack of organisational structure. The killings of Sikhs, Hindus and Muslims in 1947 were riots; the killings of Sikhs in 1984 were a pogrom.

Finally, the government conceded that about 3000 Sikh men, women and children were killed in those two days in Delhi alone. Some truths must be acknowledged. Many Sikhs survived because of the humanity of their non-Sikh - primarily Hindu - neighbours. The first glimmerings of truth emerged in the face of governmental denials because of largely non-Sikh - Hindu - judicial scholars and citizens.

If these were not "riots" how best do we label this massacre? There have been pogroms and programmed killings in history; the list is endless. Let us focus on the 20th century that has been dominated by murders perpetrated by states and non-state forces - death squads, paramilitary groups and guerrillas, etc. Perhaps the most evil occurs when states are responsible.

Some killings are rightly labeled genocide, a term first used by Lemkin, a Polish Jew, during the Second World War and widely used during the Nuremberg Trials. These crimes against humanity are prohibited in The Hague Convention of 1907. Initially these covered acts only during wars. Subsequently it was broadened to cover acts during both peace and war.

Early instances of genocide include the ethnic cleansing of Greeks and Armenians by the Turks in 1912-1923. The intractable attitudes towards such matters are clear from a remarkable irony: in Turkey even mentioning the Armenian genocide occurred would be a crime while in France suggesting that it did not happen would be prosecutable.

A noted scholar Helen Fein notes that genocides have been reported on every continent, 13 to 20 cases have been documented. Genocides and state political killings have taken the lives of over four times the number of people killed in war between 1900 and 1987.

The problem in documentation stems from the definition of terms. Scholars look for fine differences between genocide, democide, politicide and related terms. I leave such fine parsing to academicians. Suffice to say that one scholar, Rummel, estimates the number of victims in the 20th century to surpass the population of all but the five largest nation-states in the world!

The term 'Holocaust' entered our lexicon post World War II to describe Nazi atrocities against the Jewish people, though there seems no reason to limit its usage only for the 'Shoah' as the Jews remember the Nazi 'Final Solution.'

From Fein's work, I share with readers the authoritative

definition of genocide that comes from Article 2 of the Genocide Convention:

Genocide means any of the following acts committed with the intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical [sic], racial, or religious group as such:

- killing members of the group;
- causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
- deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
- imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;
- forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.

Although the Genocide Convention has been international law since 1951, owing to domestic political opposition, the United States signed the treaty only in 1988. There is nothing in the Genocide Convention that can identify 'Genocide in the Making.' There is no numeric threshold of killings that would mandate

preventive action.

Also, to me, a non-lawyer, it seems that recognition of genocide depends on nation-states, the victims cannot invoke action. Helen Fein (1995) proposed this definition: 'Genocide is sustained purposeful action by a perpetrator to physically destroy a collectivity directly or indirectly, through interdiction of the biological and social reproduction of group members, sustained regardless of the surrender or lack of threat offered by the victim.'

Yes, we remember Santayana's warning that those who do not remember their history are condemned to repeat it, but we overlook the truism that just remembering history does not lead by itself to not repeating it.

It has been said by some that "The fact that 1984 happened, the fact that we had to deal with these massive challenges, made us a better community, a bigger community and a more successful community." I hope and pray that it is so.

**Dr IJ Singh
In New York**



'The Wall of Truth' Memorial at the Rakabganj Sahib Gurdwara complex in New Delhi, dedicated to victims of 1984 genocide

BURMA STAR



Lt Gen Kartar Singh Gill recalls his father's service in that country of rubies and emeralds – Burma, now Myanmar



Young Sohan Singh of the Burma Military Police

The sun shines bright on this day in mid-March in the dusty little village of Achharwal in the year 1919. This is the abode of Hav Inder Singh of the Burma Military Police enjoying his annual leave in his permanent home' in rural Punjab. His

thoughts turn affectionately to his family of five children who have all brought joy to him and his tall, ruggedly handsome wife Indi. His son Jai Singh, has now joined him in Burma in service, the British established Burma Military Police. They have both fought battles in Mesopotamia and endured a strenuous tenure in Europe. A sigh of relief as he remembers some of the battles his *paltan* has fought. Many companions never returned. He quickly places the spade he is carrying on the ground, goes down on his knees, and offers a prayer to the Guru. He then proceeds to his fields a mile away to tend to his standing crops.

Hav Inder Singh's family consisted of three daughters and two sons. Indi doted on the younger two: Sohan and Sohni. They are lovely kids but then Sohan always gave them the jitters. A day earlier, he returned to his alma mater, the Khalsa School in Amritsar. Being a fine sportsman, the family could afford to send him to a boarding school of his choice as he had earned a scholarship. But this boy's need for stylish clothes and other articles knew no bounds. The war veteran was worried about the future. Three daughters still remained to be married.

The years went by and Hav Inder Singh was soon promoted as a Jemadar - a coveted rank in the Burma Military Police. Indi was left to look after his brood and this stout lady did it with elan. A story goes that some robbers chose her house for a raid and tried to sneak in by climbing the rear wall after removing some bricks to crawl into the *kothri* where the *sandook* with the family's treasures were stored. After all, it was rumoured that the Jemadar Sab was a very rich man. An alert Indi quietly waited for them with a steel headed *sota* in hand. As

the first head appeared, bang went the *sota* accompanied by a shower of abuses. Amid cries of pain, the robbers simply as fast as they could. Indi became the village heroine and nobody ever dared to harm this tough lady again

The scene now shifted to Burma: young Sohan had passed out of school with honours, with colours in football and athletics. He had grown tall and handsome with a stylish gait and decided to visit his dad and elder brother before joining Khalsa College, Amritsar, whose Principal, Dr Wathen was his admirer. Having arrived in Meiktila where Jemadar Inder Singh was posted, this young man quickly made his presence felt. He soon became favourite of the men of the area and was always an adept sportsman. In one



The star polo players of Burma

of the Inter-Unit Football matches between two battalions, Inder requested Col Beadon, his CO, for Sohan to play for their battalion. That day, at a royal function after the football match, which Inder's battalion won with ease, Sohan was introduced with pride to the Commanding Officer. The Deputy Commissioner of Meiktila was there too and really admired the dashing performance of this lanky lad from India and offered him an officer's job in the Burma Police.

Initially, Sohan agreed to consider the offer. Later, he was reminded of his ambition to continue studies and serve India in the Indian Civil Services. However, destiny played its part and soon Sohan Singh donned the uniform of a Police Sub Inspector and started his service in the Burma Police. He was outstanding during training and quickly excelled in horse-riding, which was then compulsory. In fact, he loved horses and decided to join these *gora sahibs* on the polo field as soon as possible.

As Sohan settled down, he soon came to like the challenge that service with the Police force offered. This young Police Officer, riding a Harley Davidson, was soon a favourite with the public and a terror for robbers and law breakers. His Burmese language was gradually improving with tuitions. Later in life, I remember hearing people say that Sohan Singh's pronunciation was so good and his handwriting so artistic that even his Burmese colleagues admired his will to learn a foreign language and master it in such a short period.

Horses and polo soon became his passion after duty.

Luckily for him, the Military Police was stationed nearby and the CO was happy to see an upcoming Polo player in the Station, and soon included him in playing local matches in his team. He was a dashing rider and quickly rose to the higher ranks of Polo players with a starting handicap of 2. Moreover, his policing abilities were outstanding and very soon he was picked up to proceed to England on an Intelligence course. On return, he was posted into the CID (Central Intelligence Department) in Rangoon, the capital city. As Inspector of Police, he was now ready to marry and his parents had already selected Bibi Harnam Kaur, the beautiful daughter of Subedar Major Sunder Singh as the right match. She had just passed the 10th class in the Government School and was much younger, but the alliance was approved and the marriage performed. Bibi Harnam Kaur now became the wife of Inspector Sohan Singh Gill of the Burma Police.

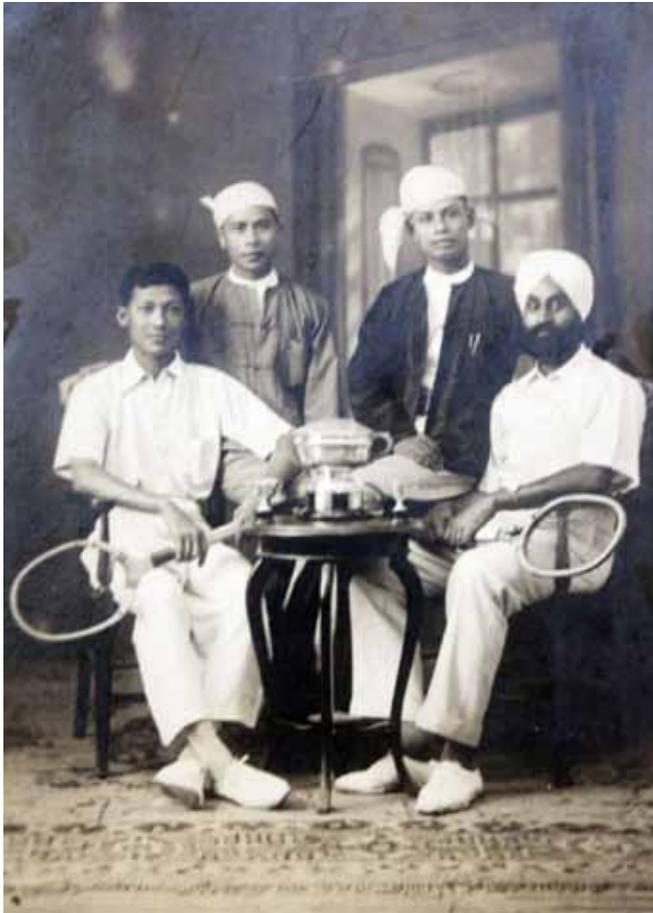
Life after Marriage

As he recalls, parents of a daughter and four boys, the family had lost a sister early to an illness at the age of three. I was the third born on 26 May 1930, that time, my father Sohan Singh was a national figure. He had earned the Burma Police Medal (BPM) for outstanding service and had leapt to a Polo handicap of 6, which was then the best in Burma. In addition, he was a club player in tennis and enjoyed a game of golf on weekends with his British seniors.

In 1936, the Royal Prince of Wales visited India and



Inspector Sohan Singh of the Burma Military Police Three generations of Burmese Sikhs



Upper Burma Tennis Doubles Champions

Burma with Mountbatten as his ADC. A round of three Polo matches was arranged in Burma. Inspector Sohan Singh was to be the star player in the Prince's team. The children were so proud of their father. "His handsome dashing figure on horseback has been imprinted in my memory for life and became my role model forever."

My mother was a pious lady. She had a proper prayer room and we children were made to recite morning and evening prayers. Although, we studied in an English school, attending the gurdwara on Sundays was a must for the whole family.

All Gurburbs were celebrated with great devotion. We looked forward to wearing smart new clothes on each Gurburb. The Granthi ji gave us tuitions in Punjabi three times a week. As we grew up and were admitted into the boarding of an American Missionary School, our visits to the gurdwara reduced in frequency.



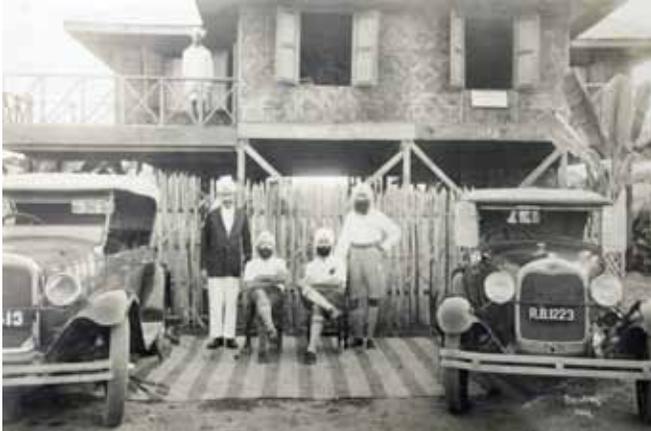
Sohan Singh of Burma

But during vacations, my mother read to us the exploits of our Gurus, the Ramayana and the valiant battles of Guru Gobind Singh. That I thought formed the bedrock of our upbringing which I gratefully acknowledge as the biggest boon of our life.

My father was always a Keshadhari Sikh, but enjoyed his drinks, which my pious mother strongly opposed to. But to his credit, we children never saw him drunk nor did he ever encourage us to drink. We continued to admire both for their sterling character and their love for each other in spite of having differences. They had great Indian friends in Burma as Indians occupied high ranks in both government as well as civil society there.

Memories of Burma

One of the most beautiful countries of my childhood has been Burma, where we saw the best - and the worst. Before World War II, it was like heaven on earth, with its beautiful forests and hills. The people were wonderful and the women charming.



With friends and their automobiles



The family home was a charming cottage

Burmese men were quite lazy and many depended on their wives to earn daily wages. However, they loved good things of life and mixed freely with all.

The Second World War brought ruin and destruction. The oil fields were destroyed and the Japanese created terror in the countryside as they swept swiftly up from Malaysia and Thailand to Rangoon and northwards to the Indian borders. My mother, with us children, travelled to India via the land route in 1942. Fortunately, my grandfather had by then built a fine, fort-like residence at our farm at Achharwal. My father marched along with the British forces to combat the Japanese



through mosquito-infested jungles and high mountains. We were homeless and completely uprooted.

During World War II, went into the Army and became a Lt. Colonel serving in the Burma Campaign until the British Indian Army launched their final offensive to re-capture Burma.

Sohan Singh was appointed Superintendent of Police

As Superintendent of Police at Magwe

at Magwe, a Central district where were located the strategic oilfields of Burma. He had served here earlier and realised that the Japanese had left behind a shattered ground which would need a major uplift by the interim government.

Law and order had completely broken down, and occupation and re-occupation had resulted in abundance of abandoned arms and ammunition with the civil population. Policing had to be gradually stepped up and illegal arms confiscated. Within a year, Superintendent of Police Sohan Singh had a tight grip on the situation and soon persuaded the Burmese Interim Cabinet led by the then young and brilliant leader, U Aung San, (Aung San Suchi's father), to revive the oil wells.

By late 1946, the Indian sub-continent was in turmoil. My brother and I were admitted into Forman Christian College, Lahore in 1947 and within a month, riots broke down Lahore. Soon enough, all students dispersed from the hostels and the college was temporarily closed down. We were evacuated from Lahore in June, and father took us to Burma. But here, the independence movement was on and the war battered country was in turmoil. Doomsday arrived, when one evening, it was broadcast on the radio that militants had gunned down the Interim Cabinet of U Aung San and left no minister alive except for U Nu, who luckily happened to be absent that day. This was Burma's greatest tragedy as the country lost a brilliant young leader, who had the potential to lead the country out of the mess left behind by the war. The British soon granted Burma independence.

My father continued to serve with grit and determination, although his heart was with us in India. He was promoted as Deputy Inspector General by the U Nu Burmese Government, which by now had attained independence and was offered Burmese citizenship. His passion for polo never left him and he even raised two polo ponies. His handicap had peaked at eight during the British days and he was perhaps one of the world's finest players.

However, he did not accept Burmese citizenship and returned to India in 1951 to settle down on his farm in Punjab.

That is the story of this star Sikh Polo player of Burma, a land which abounded in rivers and thick tropical forests, famous for finest wood in the world. A country of rubies, emeralds and peopled by some of the mildest natured men and women who invited many Indians to permanently settle down in this bounteous country. My parents sang praises on Burma till the end - the country which they had adopted as their own until the war shattered their dreams.



The Author, Lt. Gen Kartar Singh Gill, PVSM (retd.) joined the Indian Army as a commissioned Officer in 1952 and took part in all the Indo Chinese wars from 1962 to 1971, and retired in 1990 as Lieutenant General. His two younger brothers joined the Indian Air force and Indian Navy and died young serving the country with honour. Like his

illustrious father, he too was a super horse rider, who excelled in show jumping at the national level. He raised an Army polo team with the Ladakhi ponies available with the Ladakh scouts to defeat the local, boastful civilian polo champions in a rough and tough tournament played as per their crude and rugged rules.



Kartar Singh Gill with his pony 'Abhimanyu'

He is now settled in Chandigarh actively heading the 'International Sikh Confederation' and worked for the cause of education in rural areas. His dream is to bring back his ancestral province to its past glory in education as well as sports, a challenging task taken on with devoted compatriots. His wife and three sons, with their excellent educational and sports background, have been a motivation to carry on this challenging task in spite of age and increasing financial challenges in rural areas of the Punjab.

The Legal Aftermath of 1984 and The Way Forward



A seminar was held on 1 November 2016, wherein The Sikh Forum held a Panel Discussion on 'The Legal Aftermath of 1984 and The Way Forward', to commemorate the 32nd Anniversary of the November 1984 Anti-Sikh pogroms. In his powerful address, former Chief Justice of the Rajasthan High Court Justice Anil Dev Singh stated, "Government officials who neglect their duties and shut their eyes on rioters should be declared an accessory to violence."

Justice Singh, who had enhanced the compensation to the riot victims during his tenure as a judge in the Delhi High Court in 1996, also termed "unfortunate" that witnesses of the massacre were not given any protection. "There is a need to strike terror in the perpetrators and they must be punished," he added.

An the same occasion, senior advocate HS Phoolka opined, "We will not give up till we bring the perpetrators to book and will fight for justice so that no political leader misuses his powers. No one is above the country and its laws. The massacre cannot be forgotten as similar riots have been repeated in later years as the perpetrators have gone unpunished."

Urging for a stringent law to hold officials responsible for acts of violence, senior advocate Vrinda Grover said, "Public servants commit crimes but due to the loopholes in the system, they are not held liable." Grover, a human rights lawyer, also called for an alliance cutting across communities to push the government for an Act that holds public servants accountable for their negligence during such situations.

Throwing light on the CBI's apathy, Justice Singh and Phoolka said there have been shortcomings on its part and called for an independent and fast-track probe. "We can ask the government to create a commission for prevention of riots and an independent probe into the anti-Sikh pogrom. The 1984 riots cases should be tried in special fast-track courts and properties of political leaders involved in the massacre, who think their careers are sealed, should be confiscated," Justice Singh added.

HS Phoolka pointed out the CBI's lapse in a case against former MP and accused Sajjan Kumar in which a chargesheet against him for murder never reached the court.

Other panelists included the Sikh Forum Vice President A S Narang, Srinivasan Raghavan, President of Lok Raj Sangathan, Nilanjan Mukhopadhyay, journalist and Uma Chakravarti, Human Rights activist.

Raghavan, who has been organising rallies on 1 November every year for the past decade in memory of the pogrom victims, called for a *National Genocide Act* to

execute the principles of UN Convention on Genocide. A candlelight march was thereafter held on 5 November 2016 at Jantar Mantar in the heart of New Delhi to commemorate the 32nd anniversary of the '84 pogrom. Alongside many from The Sikh Forum itself, were members of the India Riots Victims Relief Committee, who cried for justice in remembrance of those less remembered victims at Kanpur.





Resolution of The Sikh Forum

Along with the discussions, stipends for education to merited children of the victims' families and underprivileged were awarded and a Resolution was adopted and forwarded to the Prime Minister of India, Narendra Modi as below.

It is 32 years after over 3000 innocent Sikh citizens of India were massacred, women savaged, property worth hundreds of crores destroyed in the national capital region of Delhi but also at Kanpur, Bokaro, Raipur, Hond-Chillar and other parts of the country. The Sikh Forum, a national and apolitical body met at New Delhi on 1st November 2016 to recollect this national shame, observing two minutes of silence and praying for the victims.

Compounding the terrible agony is the fact that there has been little collective remorse or justice for the victims and their families and this has continued for over three decades. In any civilized society, mass murder of citizens evokes sincere regret, mourning and resolution for justice.

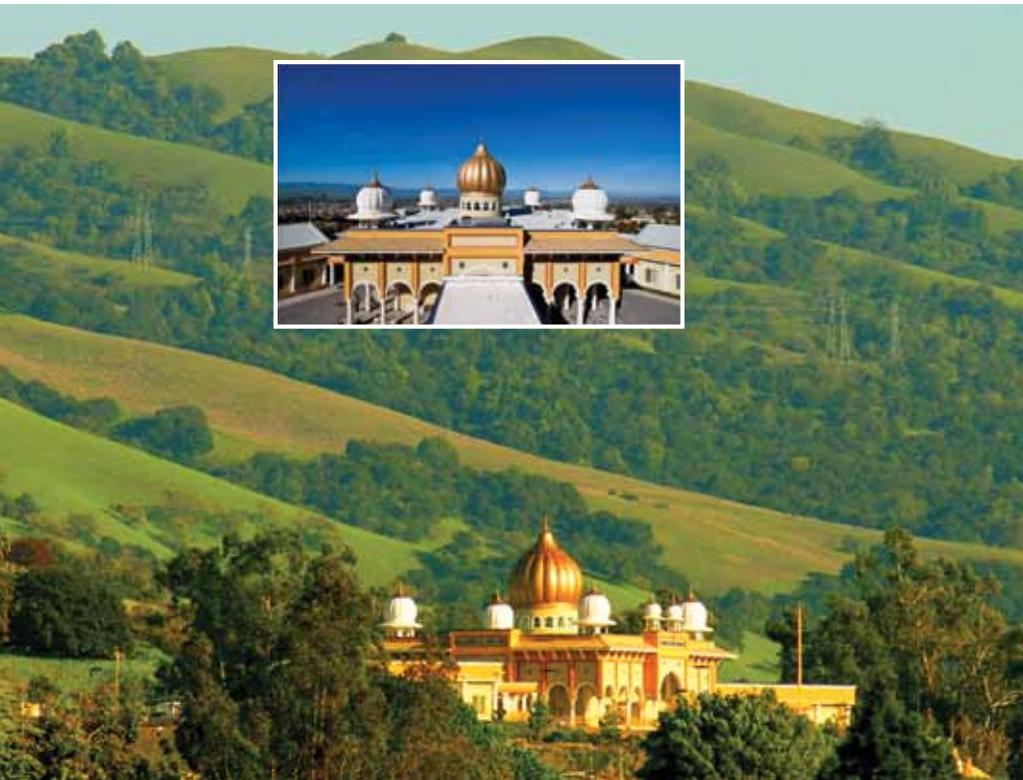
The BJP has said in every election manifesto that the guilty of 1984 will be punished if they are voted to power. Now that the BJP-led NDA government is in power, they must fulfil their resolution. We appreciate that, as per this

commitment, an SIT has already been constituted.

The meeting organised by The Sikh Forum at the India International Centre on 1 November 2016 unanimously passed the following resolutions:

1. *The Parliament of India should observe a two-minute silence to mourn the heinous murder of over 3000 Sikh citizens during the period 1-3 November 1984.*
2. *The Special Investigation Team (SIT), must complete the investigations by 31 December 2016.*
3. *Jagdish Tytler's case is pending with the CBI for investigation. Despite repeated court orders, the CBI has not concluded investigations. Action must be taken against Tytler immediately, charge-sheets filed and arrest warrants issued.*

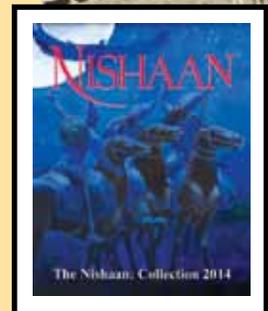
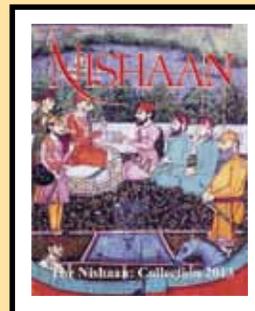
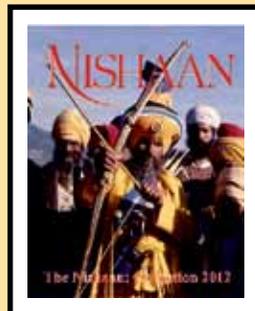
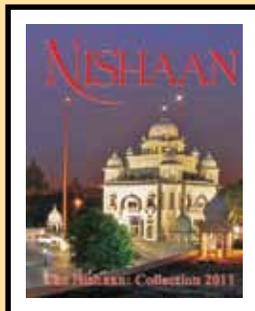
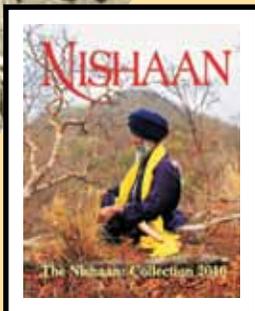
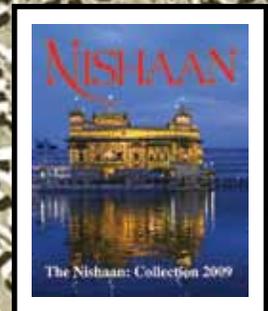
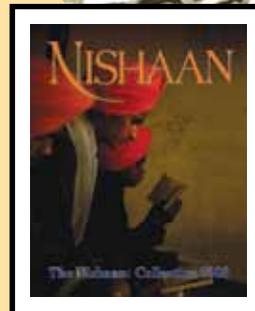
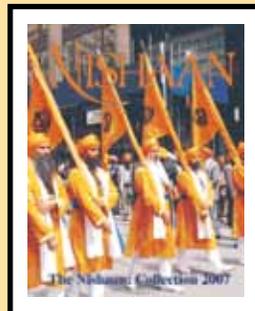
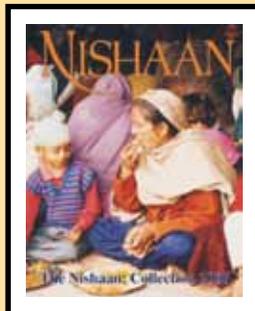
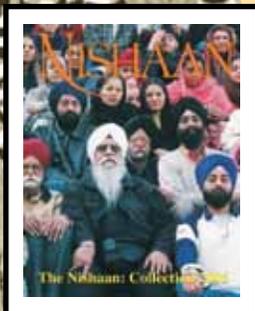
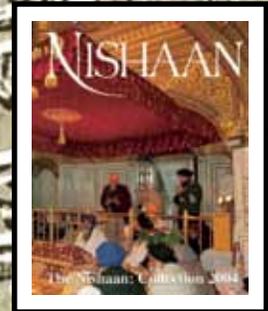
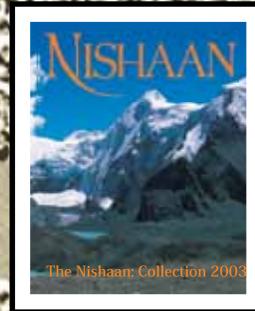
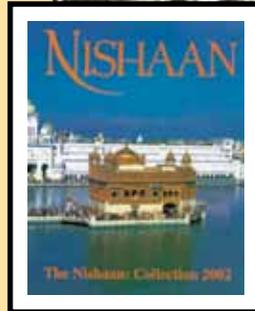
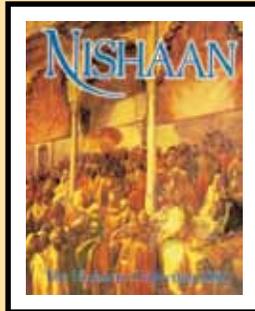
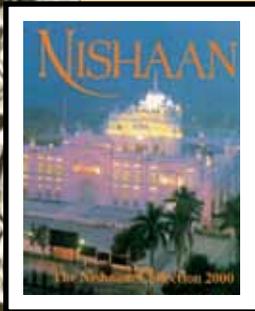
Human rights and interests of minorities have been engaging the attention of many all over the world, and The Sikh Forum resolves that it would also engage itself with people and organisations which work for adoption of universally accepted law on genocide, change in our criminal laws to penalise the instigators and participants of riots and provide for State compensation and rehabilitation of those riot effected.



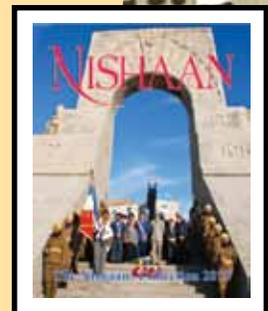
The Fifth Annual Conference on the Sikh scripture, Guru Granth Sahib, jointly hosted by the Chardi Kala Foundation and the San Jose Gurdwara, took place on 10 September 2016 at San Jose in California, USA. One of the largest and arguably most beautiful gurdwaras in North America, the Gurdwara Sahib at San Jose was founded in San Jose, California, USA in 1985 by members of the then-rapidly growing Sikh community in the Santa Clara Valley



The Nishaan Collections



The **Nishaan Collections** for 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014 and 2015 are now available in bound volumes, also including the Premiere Issue of the Journal released in April 1999 at the Tercentenary of the birth of Khalsa. **The Nishaan**, published quarterly, is considered a collector's item, to be read and kept with pride and faith Published by **The Nagaara Trust**, New Delhi, India.



Limited copies available from:

The Distribution Department Nishaan
D-43, Sujan Singh Park, New Delhi 110 003, India
Tel.: +91 11 24617234 Fax: +91 11 24628615
e mail: nishaan.nagaara@gmail.com, nishaan@lycos.com
Website: www.nishaannagaara.com