

# **AAP BEETI**

**MOHINDER SINGH RANDHAWA**

Translated by

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with

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June 2020

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## TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

Historical personalities appear frozen in time. Their lives are encompassed by two dates — birth and death — and preserved through their oft-quoted words. Public memory renders this ostensibly fixed nature of the past, into moving accounts of struggle and victory, love, and loss, such that lives belonging to history thaw. Mohinder Singh Randhawa, whose bust graces Sobha Singh's art gallery in Andretta, and whose name echoes from the corridors and avenues of Chandigarh, traverses space and time in his autobiography. His account dynamically organises and interprets the fixity of history into fluid perception, familiarising the reader with political personalities and local tribes with the same penchant for detail. He left his mark on every person he encountered.

In his illustrious career, Randhawa crossed numerous milestones: from being one among the few who cleared the Indian Civil Service exam; to serving in different administrative capacities as an officer in the United Provinces; representing British and independent India in agricultural conferences abroad; working as the Deputy Commissioner of Delhi during the riots of partition; rehabilitating the refugees who came from the newly-christened Pakistan; working for rural development and establishing libraries; collecting and documenting Kangra and Guler paintings, and the folk traditions of the Gaddi people; implementing the Green Revolution in northern India to combat the problem of food insecurity; and shaping the new city of Chandigarh as its Chief Commissioner. This long list is not exhaustive. Randhawa authored multiple books on subjects as diverse as art history, agriculture, the natural sciences, and the rehabilitation of partition refugees. In his autobiography, he offers his analysis of the political and socio-cultural circumstances of colonial and post-independence India. He shares candid assessments of the architects of the Indian nation-state, paints sociological portraits of Talukdars, British officers, and religious communities; and describes the landscapes of Punjab, the United Provinces and Delhi. *Aap Beeti* invites us into the halls where Nehru and Patel made decisions, into libraries where children were introduced to reading, and into scattered villages in the hills.

In addition to Randhawa's voice, *Aap Beeti* also records those of his elder sister Harbans Kaur, and his wife Iqbal Kaur. Harbans Kaur wrote the first seven chapters of the book, detailing their ancestry, the formative experiences of their family, and narrating anecdotes from their childhood and schooling. Randhawa's wife Iqbal Kaur concludes the book with her description of their life in an orchard (and hers as its manager); an eventful one despite being aloof from the urgency of the nearby city of Chandigarh.

Randhawa writes in a frank, conversational manner, but shifts of focus and changes in the emotional register give the text a choppy quality in some places. His accounts are matter of fact in tone, and he writes in short sentences. They end abruptly; he moves to the next situation, and then returns to a former reference. However, episodes mentioned in one part of the book are often elaborated or repeated in another section, a probable result of many chapters having been originally serialised in newspapers.

The primary problems I faced were with respect to unfamiliarity with cultural time, difficulty understanding words belonging to the Doabi dialect of Punjabi (I speak the Poadi dialect), and the challenge of translating ideas and words that do not have the exact equivalent in English. To be specific, local names of trees and plants, musical instruments, birds, caste names, names of places in Punjabi, names in English written in Punjabi to be translated back to English, shifts from active to passive voice and differences in tense in the same sentence, were some of the issues I had to address. The conflict between whether I should retain the Punjabi original (for example, roti) or write its English form (unleavened bread) initially plagued me, as I considered the balance between readability and retaining the original flavour of the writing.

The text marks a confluence of languages: of Doabi Punjabi, English phrases printed in English and interspersed with the Gurmukhi script of the book, hill Punjabi from the Kangra region and the

Gaddi people's language, stylistic legal Urdu used in court cases which Randhawa heard as a District Magistrate, and Hindi and Awadhi phrases in his chapters about working in the United Provinces. My working knowledge of Urdu and Hindi helped to translate these. For poems and folk songs in the Pahari language, discussions with older people in my community and my mother Manmeet Kaur's experiential knowledge as a child in the Doab region (which lies near the hills, leading to linguistic similarities), was a significant help. My familiarity with Hindu myths like the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, and stories of the Sikh Gurus (which had seeped into Randhawa's cultural consciousness), facilitated the process of translation.

I have attempted to address the challenges by looking for the closest equivalents for musical instruments and caste names, consulted maps for foreign names of places, provided scientific names for plants where possible, retained the nouns in Punjabi and explained them in the Glossary, and kept true to the shifts in tense and voice as per the text, except where they impeded clarity of meaning. Names of animals and birds have been translated as per references from the Punjab Wild Birds and Wild Animals Protection Act 1933, a law document that contains lists of vernacular, English and scientific names for different species of fauna of the region. I have transliterated the names of plants which I was unable to find scientific names for. Readers' inputs would be valuable in addressing any gaps. Translations of poems, folk songs and idioms have also been transliterated in the footnotes where possible, to aid comparison for those familiar with the language. I have italicised those non-English words retained in the text only when they have first been used. These italicized words can be found in the Glossary. I have used the Gurmukhi and Shahmukhi Punjabi to English Dictionary of Punjabi University, Patiala for this translation.

Translating *Aap Beeti* has been an enriching experience. The linguistic exercise aside, it led me to tap into cultural resources of myth, research about Gaddi society, partition Punjab, and wartime London, and to explore the fascinating life of a dynamic officer. As a student of Partition, Randhawa's description of riots and refugees added nuance to my analysis of state intervention in partition refugees' lives. Another interconnection that emerges is that of Chandigarh: as a resident of Chandigarh, studying Randhawa's account about how our city came into being was valuable learning. Finally, *Aap Beeti* introduced me to an ambitious, capable, and spirited man, who looked to the future while being shaped by his past.

This translation is the result of joint effort. It emerged from discussions between me and Manmeet Kaur. We unpacked meaning together, added to and subtracted from interpretation, and deliberated upon the best ways to extract lucidity despite the variance between the Punjabi and English languages. It would not have been possible without her. I am also grateful to Mrinalini Venkateswaran, whose PhD thesis at the University of Cambridge this translation supports. What began as a casual conversation, became a concerted effort. This translation was refined by her questions, suggestions, and edits, for which I am truly grateful. I am indebted to the Oriental Translation Fund of the Royal Asiatic Society for supporting this work. On behalf of Mrinalini and myself, I also thank Mr Jatinder Randhawa, the author's son, for agreeing to my undertaking this translation.

Tript Kaur  
1 June 2020

**AAP BEETI**  
(‘Autobiography’)

**By Mohinder Singh Randhawa**

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<sup>1</sup> Lit., Throne or Plank. Here ‘plank’ refers to the wooden plank placed on the ground to sit, as opposed to the grandeur of a metaphorical throne.

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<sup>2</sup> The lyrics of a hill folk song from Kangra. Roughly translates to 'the cold water of Palam'.

<sup>3</sup> 'One comes to Nadaun, who leaves?'

<sup>4</sup> The lyrics of a hill song. Translates to 'the people of Kangra are lovelier'.

<sup>5</sup> The lyrics of a hill song. Translates to 'words gone by'.

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Also in this translation:

**Glossary**

**Acronyms**

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## PREFACE

(P. 9)<sup>6</sup>

The year 1972 was a successful year in my life. The work I did in the field of development of agriculture and agricultural science was recognised by the Government of India, and I was awarded the Padma Bhushan for the same. The University of Ohio, Columbus decided to give me its Honorary Degree of D.Sc. The same year, Prof. Daleep Singh ‘Deep’ analysed and selected my Punjabi articles and told me to give him time so that he could write my biography. I told him that he would only praise me in my biography, so it would be a very boring book. Biography means that whatever good or bad has happened should be truthfully written, so I should be working on this myself. After talking to ‘Deep’, I realised that some people of Punjab are interested in knowing about my background. Punjabis also feel that I have contributed to the progress of Punjab. After Partition, I worked for the resettlement of migrants and distribution of lands; I began the trend of digging tube-wells, consolidating scattered lands, and connecting villages with metalled roads — all of which started the trend of modern farming and made people’s lives easier. I decorated Chandigarh with flowering plants, constructed museums, distributed plots of land on cheaper rates to doctors, scientists, writers, and artists and facilitated their life in this new city. Perhaps my best efforts were devoted to Punjab Agriculture University, Ludhiana, in terms of making it a source of development of Punjabi villages.

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When one begins to think that he is successful in every sphere and life is running smoothly, some incidents suddenly give rise to obstacles. In the city of Moga, a fight over tickets broke out between some students and a cinema owner, and the police fired shots. This conflict grew, spreading the agitation all over the schools and colleges of Punjab — it affected my University as well. The University had to be shut down as a last resort. I thus decided to write the story of my life because official work could not be performed then. Autobiographies are more interesting than fiction.

My elder sister Harbans Kaur remembered a lot about our childhood. Women have a better memory for minute details than men do. Harbans Kaur is three years older than me. She was better at studies than I was during our childhood. Since there was no trend of educating girls in those days, she could only study till the primary level. If she were born in modern times, she could have worked in a high-profile profession. I inspired her to write about our initial years when we met during a wedding. This was in 1973; she sent me her memoirs of our childhood after four months. Harbans Kaur has written the first seven chapters of this book. I have edited and structured them in a sequence. I wrote the rest. In this way, I wrote about the main events I experienced till 1947.

I handed all these articles to Sardar Pritam Singh and he published them one after another in his magazine *Arsi* from November 1976 to October 1978. These articles were read

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<sup>6</sup> Page numbers as per the original text, for those seeking comparison.

and appreciated by many Punjabi scholars and friends. There was a sea change in this country between 1909 and 1947. The country got its freedom, but Punjab had to pay the price. Millions of people were uprooted and looted; they lost everything and returned to their ‘own’<sup>7</sup> country. I have honestly written whatever I saw during this period of turmoil.

My research about Kangra paintings is famous all over the world, and my books about Kangra paintings are available in well-established Universities and libraries. This is the background of my research on Kangra paintings:

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In 1945, I became the Secretary of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (I.C.A.R.) and came to Delhi. After Independence and Partition, I got transferred to Punjab from U.P.<sup>8</sup> When I came to Punjab in 1948, it was broken and bleeding, and full of refugee camps. In 1949, the Punjab Government gave me the task of land distribution. I completed this with the help of Trilok Singh and Prem Nath Thapar.<sup>9</sup> We resettled refugees and developed some new plans. There were tea gardens in Kangra named Wah Tea Estate. The residents of Kangra wanted to get those tea gardens allotted to them. Since my workload was less until 1951, I decided to tour this area and see those tea gardens. I reached Palampur in April 1951 and visited some villages on horseback. I had seen the Dhauladhar from a distance, but this was the first time that I could see it so closely. Seeing this beautiful valley had a strong effect on me, similar to how Ranjha must have been affected when he first saw Heer.<sup>10</sup> I felt like looking at those peaks forever. I got the opportunity to meet the painter Sobha Singh during those travels. He has built a hut for himself in the solitude of Andretta. Sobha Singh mentioned a collection of Kangra paintings which were owned by Mian Ram Singh of Bhawarna during our conversation. I became inspired to study and develop Kangra art.

During this time, I got transferred to Ambala as its Commissioner. The Commissioner of Jalandhar receives more appeals than the Commissioner of Ambala, and some of the appeals of the Commissioner of Jalandhar were attended to by the Commissioner of Ambala. I heard the appeals for the region of Kangra, so that I could travel to Kangra more often. During those days, forty percent of the Kangra paintings had been shifted from Lahore to Punjab Museum, Shimla. These constituted the share of Indian Punjab from the treasures of the Lahore Museum. Many of these paintings were exceptionally beautiful. I believed that the sixty percent shortage of art should be rectified. We organised a huge cultural festival in Ambala. The income generated from this was used to establish many libraries, and paintings found in the Kangra valley were brought and kept in Punjab Museum, Shimla.

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<sup>7</sup> Emphasis mine, to indicate tone of tragedy in words.

<sup>8</sup> Then the United Provinces, and today largely co-terminus with Uttar Pradesh after internal reconfiguration of state boundaries in independent India. Whenever U. P. appears in this text, kindly read as United Provinces.

<sup>9</sup> Or Tirlak Singh, alt. pronunciations.

<sup>10</sup> Popular Punjabi epic of lovers beset by tragedy; has multiple versions and tellings, but the most famous version sung and studied is Waris Shah’s ‘Heer’.



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I inspired the Government of Punjab to participate in this movement of art collection. With the help of the Punjab Ministers Sardar Partap Singh Kairon and Sardar Ujjal Singh, we started receiving Rs. 20,000 every year to purchase Kangra paintings. So, we bought and kept whichever Kangra paintings we found even in the distant cities of India, in the Punjab Museum. The Information and Art Ministry of India asked me to write a book about Kangra art in 1953. I took the artist Sushil Sarkar and photographer Moti Ram Jain on a tour of the Kangra valley. We searched for Kangra paintings in the art collections of the Kings of Kangra, Guler, Lambagram and Nadaun. The same year, the Punjab Government appointed me as Development Commissioner of Punjab, and I had the privilege of touring all villages of the state. I had toured the villages of Punjab during my tenure in the Resettlement Department as well. The information I gathered as a result, was extremely useful for the development of villages. I was happiest serving in the villages of Kangra.

In October 1953, I shifted from Shimla to Punjab's new capital, Chandigarh. While living here, I got the opportunity to read a book by Mr. W.G. Archer about hill art. This book affected me greatly. The most important feature of the book was that Mr. Archer had made some assumptions about hill art while sitting in London and they were all correct. I developed great respect for Mr. Archer because of his honest and intensive research work. I wrote him a letter even though I did not know him personally. He responded to me warmly. I invited him to visit Kangra. I happily welcomed him when he visited me in March 1954. I have travelled through the Kangra valley multiple times. The travels that took place during 1953 to 1962 are also included in this book. The famous scholar Mr. W.G. Archer and well-known Indian novelist Mulk Raj Anand were also with me during my tour of March 1959 to April 1960. I got introduced to Prof. Galbraith in the year 1962. He was an American ambassador posted in Delhi, and he was India's well-wisher and friend. He also fell in love with Kangra art and we became friends. I travelled with him through the valley in 1962 and wrote a book named *Indian Painting* after returning to Delhi.

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Just like Kangra art is full of *Shingar Ras*, the folk songs of Kangra are full of *Preet Ras*.<sup>11</sup> Beautiful doe-eyed women with lustrous bodies tortured by the fire of separation stand on rooftops in dark nights, missing lovers gone afar and sending them missives of the heart. They ask the clouds and birds to inform their lovers about their condition. The scenes and songs of consummation are more enjoyable. The meeting of separated lovers is the most important task of the soul. Souls meet life, just like flame meets flame. This is the pinnacle of happiness; this is the philosophy of meeting God. Those who have not experienced the essence of true love have wasted their lives, no matter how much they pray, how much they wander in forests and

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<sup>11</sup> In Bharata's *Natyashastra*, Shingar or Sringara Rasa is one of the nine *rasas* (loosely translated as flavour/essence), and signifies erotic love, attraction or beauty. The theory of the nine *rasas* is foundational for Indian classical art forms, be they music, theatre, dance, poetry or sculpture. *Sringara* is pronounced as *Shingar* in Punjabi. While *Preet rasa* is not listed in the *Natyashastra*, it would be categorised within *Sringara Rasa*. Here, 'Preet Ras' is used metaphorically to refer to the essence of love.

mountains. God is love, unconditional true love which makes you forget the materiality of the body; a love that swims in the sea of ecstasy. These songs of Kangra have the true voice of many hearts. They take us to a fragile world, the world of true love.

I discovered that Punjabi is also the language of Kangra, Bilaspur, Suket, Mandi, Jammu and Chamba through my research and study of the songs of Kangra. This result emerged after extended discovery and this is important especially today, when blinded by emotion, people do not hesitate to lie. This research proved that Punjabi is the common language of Mother India and it is not the personal property of any community or religion. The greatness of Kangra folk songs is further proved by this incident. I appointed Punjab's famed poet Mohan Singh as an Emeritus Professor in Punjab Agricultural University. One day, I decided that a fountain should be installed in the University in his memory, on which one or two lines of his poetry could be engraved. I really liked his poem about a mango plant but that was exceedingly long. I told him that there were a lot of heart touching *tappe* to be found in the Kangra folk songs. A young girl proudly asks of her lover:

“Sew me a skirt out of the sky, oh bangle seller, its border designed with the earth.”

In another song, the protagonist who has lost her lover in an accident expresses her grief as:

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“If my blouse tears, I can patch it; if my sky tears, how do I sew it back?”

Mohan Singh thought a lot about my question, but he could not present any song like this.

I have also written about my discovery of the folk songs of the hills in this book. When people see a successful person, they believe his life would have been comfortable and he would not have struggled. They do not understand that success happens only after facing multiple problems. I have realised that man becomes himself only after facing troubles, just like iron becomes stronger after passing through the heat of fire. Similarly, human life is a tough struggle and man becomes man only after facing difficulties. I hope that today's students will be inspired by my description of problems and difficulties and wish that they become successful in their own struggles.

I retired from Punjab Agricultural University, Ludhiana in September 1976. I had gotten my scheme of writing about India's history of agriculture approved by the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (I.C.A.R). I completed this work by writing four books in February 1982. Sardar Pritam Singh and many others frequently asked me to write about my experiences from 1949 to 1980. The problem was that my fingers would hurt upon writing fast. The editor of the *Punjabi Tribune*, Sardar Barjinder Singh said, “Whatever you write now, I will very happily publish in my newspaper.” He asked his sub-editor Sardar Shingara Singh Bhullar to meet me from time to time and write whatever I dictated. It is with his assistance that this work has been completed in March 1985.

1 March 1985

*Mohinder Singh Randhawa*

## **Part I: Childhood**

## Chapter 1

### **Sweet memories of childhood**

Bodlan, Zira, Samrala and Nawanshahr (1902 – 1913)

(P. 17)

The sweet and loving memories of childhood. Sardar Sher Singh was born to Sardarni Mehtab Kaur and Sardar Jaimal Singh Randhawa, in the month of *Kattak* in village Bodlan,<sup>12</sup> Tehsil Dasuya, District Hoshiarpur. He had a younger brother named Mehar Singh, and his sister's birth and his birth in the month of *Kattak* were considered difficult births. It is said that a child born in *Kattak* does not survive, and if he does, he has an illustrious life. This was the reason my parents used to organise prayer meetings and *langar* in the month of *Kattak* every year. They would make announcements in the whole village, including in the *Chamardi*, that no one should cook that day and that everyone was invited to consume food prepared in their house.<sup>13</sup> Sardar Sher Singh was sent to the village Bercha to study. He started studying in Hoshiarpur after completing Class Five. Bhikhe Khan, a boy from the Ranghar family of Bercha, was one of his dear friends; he would reach Hoshiarpur on Saturday and both of them would travel to Bodlan, to enjoy their Sunday in the village. On every Monday, Bhikhe Khan would drop him back in Hoshiarpur. They were good friends. Our father has told us many stories of his childhood. In 1918, he was involved in an accident while travelling via tonga.

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Due to this accident, his leg was severely hurt, and he could not sleep well at night because of the pain. He would make me sit next to him and narrate his old memories.<sup>14</sup> My brothers were young then. They would fall asleep while pressing his legs but I was older so I could remain awake throughout the night. I also loved my father a lot. My father used to tell me that when he was first married, he was eight years old, he remembered wearing earrings in his ears and ornaments woven into his hair. His first wedding happened in his childhood with Sardarni Bishan Kaur in village Daghana. She was a rustic woman and was very stubborn. Then father told me, "I had three sons and a daughter by the time I had become Naib Tehsildar. I asked her to come to the city with me, but she began saying, "You are now a gypsy, you keep going here and there, but I will not leave the house". She refused outright." Then he told his father that he should either force his wife to accompany him to the city or get him married elsewhere, "I cannot live with this stubborn woman", he said. Sardar Jarnail Singh did not agree but grandmother Mehtab Kaur agreed with him. Mothers tend to adore their sons. She gave him permission saying, "Son, you can marry where you like."

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<sup>12</sup> Details of traditional months are provided in the Glossary.

<sup>13</sup> The colloquial term 'Chamar', used to refer to Dalits engaged in the profession of leatherwork (and used in rural areas till date), primarily has derogatory implications. It is a caste slur, and is viewed as a legal atrocity on Dalits when used by upper caste/ *savarna* individuals. This text is undoubtedly dated, but I have retained such words in the interest of authentic translation.

<sup>14</sup> 'Me', here, is Mohinder Singh's sister Harbans Kaur writing, as mentioned in the Preface. Her words entwine with her brother's, the stories of their parents and ancestors, sometimes inconsistently.

Father was working in Tehsil Zira. Sardar Prem Singh of village Phuwan Singhwala in Zira Tehsil got his sister married to him. Grandmother had sent him a lot of money to buy jewellery for the bride through the hands of the village barber, but the barber gave Father only a little, and kept most of it for himself. *Dadi ji* did not mention this at home out of fear, but the barber was not allowed to enter their house ever again. When he brought the second wife named Kirpal Kaur to the village, my grandmother and my father were very happy. She was a good-natured daughter of Sikhs. *Dadi ji* said, “Son, leave her with me for some time.” Father used to obey his mother, so he left his new wife in the village. In those days, Bishan Kaur fell ill with tuberculosis and the kind Kirpal Kaur took care of her whole-heartedly. Bishan Kaur died, but Kirpal Kaur also caught the disease. She died within the second year.

Now Sardar Sher Singh was transferred to Tehsil Samrala. All staff members came to know that the Tehsildar’s wife was no more and that he was looking for another wife.

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One Patwari was working in village Badh Singh Wala Takhar. He used to live in Joginder Buta Singh’s house. He informed Father that Sardar Buta Singh’s granddaughter and Sardar Hazoor Singh’s daughter named Bachint Kaur, was educated and wise, and that there was no one as lovely as her. “If Huzoor wants to see her, I can arrange that. My wife and the girl both sit together on the first floor and do embroidery work.” The Tehsildar decided to tour village Jabharan.<sup>15</sup> The Patwari planned with his wife that since the Tehsildar was visiting their village on horseback that day, she would sit with Bachint Kaur in front of the room on the first floor so that he could see the girl. When the Tehsildar saw the girl, he was amazed and asked himself, “Where was this beautiful goddess born — she has a strong body, her complexion is as pink as a rose, beautiful eyes...”

He was happy to see her; he told the Patwari that he must ask her father and get their marital match finalised. The Patwari talked to her father and convinced him to wed his daughter to the Tehsildar. They were told that Father only had one child. The wedding was conducted at Samrala. After some time, they went to Bodlan, where she saw his four children — three sons and one daughter, much to her surprise. Sardarni Bachint Kaur was a wise, kind, and spiritual person. She requested her husband to take all the children along. “We will educate them and make them skilful.” The Tehsildar agreed, his innermost wish was fulfilled by his wife herself. Now the whole family began to live together. The three sons — Harcharan Singh, Amrik Singh and Harbans Singh were sent to school. Their hair was shorn. But *Bibi* Bachint Kaur was from a Singh family,<sup>16</sup> so she decided to maintain long hair for all three of them. She cleaned and tied their long hair with great care and made them *keshdhari*.<sup>17</sup> The children were exceptionally beautiful. Their grandfather was also very good looking. After some days, the Tehsildar got transferred to Zira again. Father’s residence was in the house of Lala Malla Mal, which exists in Aggarwal street, even today. This was a half kutchra and half pucca house. The ground floor

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<sup>15</sup> By Tehsildar, Harbans Kaur implies her Father, the Tehsildar. He is addressed with respect (‘Your Highness’ or Huzoor)

<sup>16</sup> Singh here refers to a Sikh who truly follows all principles of the Sikh faith.

<sup>17</sup> One who keeps long hair, literally: *kesh* means hair, and *dhari* (suffix) means one who wears it.

had two rooms, and there was one room on the first floor. There was a passage on the ground floor which was joined by a dressing room on the side. Lala Malla Mal's bungalow was at some distance from this house, and the entrance had a beautifully carved work of art said to be created by the carpenter Sardar Chanan Singh. One can see the reflection of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in the old market of Zira. Jewellers make jewellery in the front yards of small shops. The bazaar is so narrow that people jostle against each other while crossing.

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In the last century, this poorly designed bazaar witnessed a lot of hustle and bustle; women would come from the villages to buy *parandi*, lip tint, wax, etc. There are a lot of havelis with beautifully engraved wooden doors owned by Jain Mahajans in Zira. This artwork is called 'Sathi', and most of them were the creations of the artist Sardar Bhagat Singh. Sardar Bhagat Singh was taught by Sardar Kapoor Singh, a carpenter from Zira. Bhagat Singh's son, the artist Sardar Kirpal Singh earned a name for himself by painting scenes of Sikh history.<sup>18</sup> It is a beautiful model of 19<sup>th</sup> century carpentry. We can enjoy the beauty of this art even while crossing these narrow lanes.

There is a Jain temple in Zira which was constructed in 1891 by Maikadha, the widow of Lala Mehtab Mal. It has beautiful paintings on its roof and walls which were created by Gopal 'Chitera'.<sup>19</sup> It is said that Gopal had come from Bikaner and the Jain moneylenders became his patrons. The roof of the temple is embellished with glass work by carpenter Thamman Singh. Lala Sawan Mal's inn is the most beautiful building in Zira. He got it constructed in 1901. Interesting relief carvings of limestone adorn the doors on the upper side of the windows. A hand designed with limestone, and scenes from the Mahabharata and Ramayana, are carved on the sides. The passage of the inn has wall paintings portraying the pastimes and desires of the people of those times. One wall has a painting of a train and there is an English driver standing in the engine. Kikar Singh and Ghulam Bhalwan are shown wrestling on the other wall. Kikar Singh is as dark as the Kikar tree and Ghulam is fair. It is difficult to decide who won out of them. People from Malwa break into conflicts while discussing this wrestling match, even today, and try to decide their arguments about who won by fighting with their *daangs*. No child was born of Sawan Mal's first marriage. He liked the daughter of a poor Aggarwal shopkeeper. Sawan Mal asked him, "What is your daughter like?" to which the shopkeeper answered, "My daughter is like silver." Sawan Mal weighed that girl with silver coins and gave that money to her father.

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He got a palanquin made of gold with curtains of silver chains for bringing his new bride home.

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<sup>18</sup> People are referred to by their professions or caste names as prefixes or suffixes to their names e.g., Kirpal Singh Artist. While this sounds unfamiliar in English, it is a common form of reference in Punjabi.

<sup>19</sup> Chitera: Artist/Painter of scenes. Again, *Chitera* is a suffix after the name of the artist, Gopal.

The Tehsil office of Zira is quite old. This is a fort-like structure with domes on the corners, and it was converted into an office by the British in 1854.

On the morning of 1 January 1905, a girl was born in the household of the Tehsildar. He did not interact with the girl child at all for three to four months. One day when he came back from court, the child was playing in her cradle. The mother was pretty, and so was the child. He gently touched the child's face with the silver handle of his walking stick, and the child laughed. He felt affection for her and so he picked her up. He became very affectionate towards her after that. The girl was named Harbans Kaur after her brother's name Harbans Singh. But Harbans Kaur is not a nice name. A person with this name cannot live a happy and successful life.<sup>20</sup> When the daughter was three years old, twin boys were born to her parents on the night of 23/ 24 September 1908. Both the boys were very good-looking and would become a source of pride for the Randhawa family. Prayer meetings were conducted to celebrate their birth. The first alphabets of their names were taken from the Guru Granth Sahib – 'R' and 'M'. The first son was named Rajinder and the second was named Mohinder, but their father used to call them Jungo and Maungo. The Tehsildar wanted his wife to take care of the twins with the help of a house maid but the farsighted *Sardarni* stated that she would breastfeed her sons herself because her sons would lose their intelligence if somebody else's milk was fed to them. A woman named Punjabu was kept as a help for raising both the sons. She belonged to the Cheemba caste and was from village Tadoke of District Ferozepur. She was a very honest woman with good character. She was a widow and had one son whose name was Bishan Singh. She served us for many years. She was quick to laughter. We had a gramophone in our house. Whenever it was played, both mother and son used to sit around it and laugh a lot. We used to knock on Bishna's head when it was shaved by the barber.

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Bosworth Smith was the Deputy Commissioner of Ferozepur. He was a proud and stubborn man and did not treat his Punjabi staff well. Once when one of his staff members yawned, the D.C. poured an inkpot into his mouth. Our father was a self-respecting and upright officer. He could not tolerate humiliation from anyone. He took a long leave to stay away from that horrible officer. Now, it was our turn to live in the village. Our mother wanted to construct a house so beautiful that no other house nearby could be compared with it. Father agreed with this suggestion and started constructing a house. Bricks and cement were bought from distant places, and our village folk happily helped by ferrying them on their bullock carts. Mother used to lovingly prepare food for them. One dessert like halwa, vegetable, raita and *maanah dal* would be prepared. The workers were fed well. In those days, the workers would praise the delicious food she would cook for them and everyone started calling her '*Mata ji*'.

This was the first house made of double bricks in Bodlan. Small bricks called 'Nanakshahi bricks' had been used earlier. The windows of our drawing room were fixed with colourful glass —blue, yellow, orange, green and red coloured glass, by Father. There was a small gallery in front of this room which was bordered by curved grills. Landlords used to come from faraway places to see our house. When we were in Phillaur, one gentleman came

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<sup>20</sup> Harbans Kaur, M.S. Randhawa's sister writes this herself.

to visit Father. Rajinder was sitting near Father when he started praising our house. The conversation was somewhat like this and Rajinder was also commenting:

Father: “We have fixed very beautiful coloured glass in our house.”

Rajinder: “Many boys have broken them with slingshots.”

Father: “We have used very clean cement to make floors.”

Rajinder: “The floor has developed cracks.”

After this father could not shower any more praise on the house. We lived on the first floor of our ancestral house while our new house was getting constructed. Our uncle Mehar Singh and his wife used to live on the ground floor. Our *Chachi ji* was a very affectionate lady.

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Our mother did not allow us to eat old chapattis made of corn flour. We used to take old chapattis from our Aunt and mix them with curd and sugar; hide behind a door and enjoy that dish.

Both the sons had been weaned off breast milk after coming to Bodlan. They used to sit near the windows of one room and cry and complain to Uncle, “*Chacha ji*, mother is not giving us milk.” They cried for a week and then stopped. We would be very scared when it would rain, lightning would strike, and clouds would thunder — mother would take a bedsheet and hide us under it. We would be happy as we would feel no more fear.

There was a sadhu living in the orchards of a village. He would send a message to a house. He would refer to everyone as ‘Ram ji’ and say, “Tell Ram ji to prepare the vegetable of *vadi* with chapatti and serve it to me.” Brother Amrik Singh would go and invite the sadhu. Sister-in-law Basant Kaur, the wife of brother Harkaran Singh, and mother would lovingly prepare the food. Our grandmother would refuse to bow before the sadhu and say, “He considers my son’s house a free kitchen”; she would hide upon seeing the sadhu. She would never donate anything to him. She did not die well. A few months before she was about to pass away our father had left us in the new house to take care of his mother. She kept walking around the house and opening all the locks, three days before she died. When my mother woke up and saw grandma’s empty bed, she became anxious. She woke everybody up. Grandma was walking on the ground floor. On asking her what she was doing, she said, “Daughter, your father-in-law had visited. I told him, “See what a beautiful house your son has made!” I was showing him the whole house.” Look at the highs and lows of nature — she was so bedridden that we had to take care of her sanitary needs, but we do not know which power enabled her to walk around the whole house before her death. Then she used to say, “Please do not hit me, I will walk on my own”.<sup>21</sup> Thus, she died after being troubled for a long time.

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Now her pyre was decorated — poppy beads were wrapped in silver and gold foil and

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<sup>21</sup> These lines from the text imply that she suffered from bouts of irrationality and forgetfulness. Her fitful walking around the house and talking to unseen beings about being hit explains how Randhawa suggests this.



covered by a Banarsi dupatta. Father travelled all the way from Nawanshahr on horseback and reached on time. A harmonium was being played in front and *rababis* were singing hymns. Lotus seeds, sweet dry fruit and coins which were kept in silverware were to be thrown over the pyre. Two men were carrying Rajinder and Mohinder on their shoulders. They had feather fans in their hands and were fanning their grandmother's pyre while the procession was going to the cremation ground. The long procession left home to reach the cremation area. Father cremated his mother very respectfully by using desi ghee and other condiments. This was followed by a prayer meeting. For seventeen days, Rababis from Jhinran used to perform *kirtan* twice daily. It was concluded on the seventeenth day. It had a huge gathering. A lot of food was served.

We stayed in the village for a long time after her passing. We used to gather garbage in the evening to burn it. We would bathe and wear clean new clothes in the morning. There was a well in front of our house. The water from the well would spill and make a small pond. I used to enter this pond to catch frogs with the boys of the village. My clothes would get spoiled and muddy. Fireflies used to dance on this pond in the evening. We would put them in glass bottles and enjoy the beautiful light emitted by these insects. Then we would bathe and change. Both the boys would take a towel and scythe and go to the orchard. They would cut a little grass, gather it in the towel. They would say, "We got grass for 'Mimi'". The calf's name was Mimi. Another son was born to our parents in the village, he was named Harkishan Singh by the sadhu.

Now father took all of us to Nawanshahr. Bangle-makers used to live near our house in Nawanshahr. They would make glass bangles. They used to lovingly invite us to their home, serve us sweet rice which we would enjoy eating. One day, our parents got to know that we go to a Muslim bangle-maker's home, and so we were scolded. After that, we used to avoid going to their house.

We had a dog named Bhaur and a bitch named Kali. One day Bishna bathed them. Water went into their ears and they both died. Father was a dog-lover, but his dogs never survived. He was fond of mares too. He had two mares and every year one would give birth to a foal. He would feed it sugar and ghee. It was my duty to feed the mare and the foal. Bishna would pick the sugar-ghee up and ask me, "Bibi can I eat it?" I would say, "Eat it, there is so much, we will feed the mare later."

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He would eat a little and then feed the mare. There was a village near Sandhwa Frala near Nawanshahr. Contractor Sher Singh who earned lot of wealth in Burma was a resident of that village.<sup>22</sup> He wanted to perform the engagement of his daughter in our family, but the question arose — who out of the twins should be engaged? This was decided by using slips, so Rajinder was chosen to be engaged at the age of four. Pigeons were kept for us to play with at Nawanshahr. They were of many varieties. We would play with them. They all had separate spaces for living.

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<sup>22</sup> Burma: today, Myanmar.

Chapter 2  
**A Happy Home**  
 Kartarpur (1917)

(P. 26)

We got transferred from Nawanshahr to Kartarpur. Situated on the Grand Trunk Road, Kartarpur is nine miles away from Jalandhar. It is famous for its furniture industry. The carpenters of this place make strong chairs by using the wood of the sheesham tree, in fact, these chairs are used by middle-class Punjabi households even today. These carpenters have installed their saw-machines on either side of the G.T. road, while sheesham tree trunks grow before every shop-front.

We reached the fort of the Sodhis after crossing the narrow lanes of the bazaar. We then crossed the main gate fixed with huge nails after passing through the *burj*. Walking a little further, one can see the Rang Mahal on the right side, while the palace of the Sodhis is on the left. Gurdwara Thumji Sahib is located ahead of this crossing, there is a guava orchard across it.

Guru Arjan Dev ji founded the city of Kartarpur in the late 16<sup>th</sup> century. Dhir Mal died in 1677.<sup>23</sup> In 1750, Ahmad Shah Abdali burned it down. Guru Gulab Singh constructed the fort and pool in 1785. Sadhu Singh was the Guru of the Kartarpur seat during the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh.

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He had a falling out with the Raja of Kartarpur, Fateh Singh Ahluwalia, and the Maharaja supported Sadhu Singh in this conflict. The Maharaja assigned the task of maintaining the *baoli* of Guru Arjan Dev ji to Sadhu Singh, and also gifted him the shops of Dabbi Bazaar as jagir. Sadhu Singh died in 1854.

The Gurus of Kartarpur have an old copy of the Adi Granth Sahib which has a picture of Guru Hargobind ji — the picture is displayed on the fair of *Sangrand*. They have some of Guru Nanak Dev ji's personal belongings like his bag, cap etc. as well. The followers of the Sodhi gurus arrive from distant places to express their devotion.<sup>24</sup> The feet of these Gurus are washed, and that water is consumed as nectar or 'Charan Pahul', during fairs.

The Sodhi Guru of Kartarpur, Naunihal Singh had died. He had two minor sons, Atma Singh and Trilochan Singh. They owned a lot of property which the court was taking care of. Our father was made Manager, Court of Wards by the Government, to manage this property. Thus, an honest officer was given this position for four years. Father worked extremely hard to manage their property and helped the Mahajans be free of debt.

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<sup>23</sup> Dhir Mal was the elder son of the sixth Sikh Guru, Guru Hargobind Sahib, who was denied the Guruship, which instead went to his younger brother. He is known for capturing the only version of the Gurbani in textual form and establishing his own line of 'gurus'. See, [https://www.sikhiwiki.org/index.php/Dhir\\_Mall](https://www.sikhiwiki.org/index.php/Dhir_Mall) for one version of this story.

<sup>24</sup> From Dhir Mal's line of descent, these Sodhi Gurus are different from the 10 Sikh Gurus revered by the Sikh community as a whole, with the eleventh Guru being the Guru Granth Sahib itself.

One of the houses was named Rang Mahal. There was a well and a winter house nearby. Water was taken out of the well with the help of a bucket, but we were rarely allowed to see it — our parents worried that we might fall inside. The staircase to the well was always locked. The remains of the house demolished to set up the well are still there.

Rajinder and Mohinder were admitted in the Government High School. Mother gave them boiled rice and curd on the very first day of their school. They were four years old when they began to go to school. Mother would always lovingly bathe them, comb their hair, and dress them in clean clothes to send them to school. One peon would take them to school and bring them back. A tutor was arranged to teach them at home. Both the boys were very good at studies. Our parents worked hard to educate them. During lunch break, thirty soaked almonds and one litre of milk was sent to school for the boys.

Sardar Harnam Singh was the headmaster of the school. This was the time of World War I; the English were fighting with the Germans. Many English officers would visit the school.

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Harnam Singh had taught the ‘God Save the King’ to his son so he could please the English officers by reciting it. My brothers used to tell me that the school masters were very cruel to the boys. There was a maulvi who would threaten the boys with a knife, when angered during lessons, and tell them, ‘Come, I’ll take out your liver.’ Some boys were hung upside down from a kikkar tree to drive home the point. ‘Making them peacocks’ and keeping their hands under the table legs were common punishments.<sup>25</sup>

Once, both the brothers went to Gurdwara Charan Kanwal, which has a statue of Naunihal Singh and is surrounded by a pond. They went there to bathe, but accidentally slipped. There were algae on the floor of the pond, making the ground very slippery. Mohinder was about to drown but a pilgrim saved him.

Diwali was celebrated with great fervour in the Fort of Kartarpur. Lines of earthen lamps would be kept on the walls of the palace of the Sodhis. Once the lines were set, we would light the lamps. One time, Rajinder’s turban caught fire while lighting lamps. Mohinder quickly hurled the turban away from Rajinder’s head and saved him.

Mohinder also had the habit of sleep walking.<sup>26</sup> One night, he got up and kept walking about in his sleep. We thanked God that no accident like falling off the roof happened. Mohinder also had the habit of working very hard. He would always be interested in studying. Rajinder was more interested in playing. He would study for some time and memorise quickly, but he did not work hard.

I also started studying in my lessons. I expressed my desire of studying to Mata ji, who asked Pita ji to get me admitted into the Arya Samaj Primary School. I loved to study, but I do not know why my father did not want to let me study. I also completed four classes of Hindi in

<sup>25</sup> ‘Making peacock/rooster’ or *murgha banana* is a form of corporal punishment in South Asia, where the individual squats like a rooster, and holds each ear by looping the arms around the body. See Madan Mohan Jha, *From Special To Inclusive Education In India: Case Studies Of Three Schools In Delhi*, (Pearson Education India, September 2010). p. 51.

<sup>26</sup> The text follows this with ‘somnambulist’ printed in English.

two years. I used to get first position in all subjects in my school. I would stand first in the stitching classes, and I also used to perform evening prayers orally. But one gets only what one is destined to get.

We used to go to watch the *Ramlila* in a horse cart pulled by two horses. We used to get pocket money to spend. Everyone would spend their money, but Mohinder would keep it unused. We used to keep our extra money with our sister-in-law, her name was Basant Kaur.

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We used to sit in the front row and watch the Ramlila. We would also make our friends sit with us in the first row.

We would be happy when Ravana's and Ram Chandra's armies would fight. We used to think that it was all real...Hanuman would burn the Lanka made of paper, and we would be thrilled... Kumbhkarana would be woken up with the beat of the drum.<sup>27</sup>

When Bali's son Angad would go to Ravana's durbar as the messenger of Ram Chandra, he would set his foot on the ground and challenge the whole durbar to move his foot. Everyone would try and fail, and finally Ravana would come and try to move his foot. But, Angad would lift his foot and comment, 'Oh King, I am a lowly servant of Ram ji. Please do not touch my foot. If you want to remain safe, please approach Ram ji and seek his refuge.'<sup>28</sup> Everyone would laugh at Ravana's embarrassment. Back in those days, we used to enjoy the Ramlila a lot and would excitedly wait for it to be performed.

We would enact the Ramlila at home after it finished. We would apply cosmetics just like the characters, become Rama, Lakshmana and Sita, and hold bows and arrows. We would open our hair, wear yellow dhotis, and become *banwasi*. we would play for one month and forget about it soon after.

There was a Sheesh Mahal Gurdwara in the Fort of Kartarpur. The Adi Granth Sahib and the *khanda* with which the sixth Guru had killed Painda Khan were kept in this Gurdwara. We would go to Bhai Ganga Singh ji in the evening, hold one cymbal each and sing the evening hymns with him. '*Gagan Mein Thaal Rav Chand Deepak, Bane Taarika Mandal Janak Moti*'.<sup>29</sup> We used to be delighted to sing the hymn of Dhanna Bhagat, '*Hey Dayal Tera Aarta Gopal, Tera Aarta/ Jo Jan Tumri Bhagat Karante, Tin Ke Kaaj Swarta*'.<sup>30</sup> It was our daily routine to

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<sup>27</sup> Refer to the Ramayana epic for the context of these characters. The C. Rajagopalachari rendition of the Ramayana satisfyingly delineates the story for readers, but one can also refer to the Devdutt Pattanaik version: *Sita: An Illustrated Retelling of the Mahabharata*, for basic context and plot from Sita's perspective.

<sup>28</sup> *Sharan*: implies shelter/refuge. Here it also implies forgiveness.

<sup>29</sup> This is a line from Gurbani, it is an *aarti* composed by the first Guru, Guru Nanak during his *udasi* (or journey) to the East. It is said to have been influenced by his visit to the Jagannath Temple at Puri, Odisha. It is recited by Sikhs as part of the *Sohila* prayers in the evening.

<sup>30</sup> Roughly means that the prayer (*aarti*) is addressed to God saying that whoever prays to God, becomes His devotee; God responds by helping them accomplish their tasks, and improves on their efforts.

participate in the *Aarti*. We used to get *patasha prasad* after the *ardaas*.<sup>31</sup> We would then return home, which was inside the fort itself. Influences that impact young children have lasting impressions, even if they are religious in nature. In earlier times, the morning and evening prayers were a must in every Sikh household.

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The Guru Granth Sahib would be placed in every house.<sup>32</sup> The women of the house would perform prayers and would read out Sikh history for their children. Children used to be kind; now these pious lifestyles have been replaced by cinemas...

A group of sadhus, named *Narsingh Udasi*, used to visit Kartarpur.<sup>33</sup> Father was very fond of arranging good food for Sodhis and saints, so he used to feed them. The food would be prepared with great love. The saints would come reciting hymns, we used to observe them fondly. They would be given money afterwards. In this way, replete with interesting incidents, this beautiful time of our life passed in Kartarpur, but our experience of love and pampering would end here soon.

I think we should call the ground floor of the Rang Mahal, the arena of our play. One day, I thought I had got powdered henna from the first floor, but it was a hair dye which father used to apply. I came downstairs and applied it on Rajinder, Mohinder and on other friends' palms and feet. When we washed our hands and feet to remove the colour after some time, they had turned black. I became scared because I knew I would be punished. I stayed downstairs. Both the brothers went up and when Mother saw their hands, she asked, "Son, what have you applied on your hands?" They replied, "Mother, sister had applied henna on our hands, but they turned black."

I went up only when father returned home. I knew that I would get punished, but because Father used to save me from Mother's anger, I knew that he would not let mother glare at me. Father would save me from the consequences of my antics by saying, 'I have only one daughter, please do not hit her'. I was proud of his love for me. Thus, our time passed very pleasantly.

A home tutor used to teach our brothers. I believed that Master ji could also teach me alongside. One day, I bought an Urdu primer, sat near the teacher, and asked him to teach me. He laughed and said, "I will not get paid to teach you." I told him that I would bring him a glass of milk for every lesson. I started learning how to read books in a month and learned to write Urdu. I also learned Punjabi from the village saints — I learned the *Panj Granthi*, *Das Granthi*, *Bhagat Bani* and *Bai Waaran*, from him.<sup>34</sup> I learned all this in one year.

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<sup>31</sup> *Ardaas*: lit., prayer, but while it is religious in nature, it is not formally a part of Gurbani. It seeks the blessings of God and the Gurus, reminds one of the sacrifices of the Sikh community to retain their faith, and expresses gratitude.

<sup>32</sup> *Prakash karna* is the phrase used to explain how the Adi Granth is formally introduced, kept and maintained in homes and gurdwaras.

<sup>33</sup> Called so, because they played the *Narsingha* musical instrument, a trumpet-like instrument.

<sup>34</sup> These are all religious and literary texts in Punjabi.

All of us used to play in the garden in the afternoon. The garden was in the fort itself. Some pilgrims would think that my brothers were the Gurus and would place some money before their feet.

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I would pluck motia flowers, insert shiny paper in them and make beautiful garlands. I would put these garlands on my father's and brothers' necks.

There was an iron cage in the garden. A monkey used to live there. Its name was Sunder. We used to give it eatables. Maya, one of our friends, was a doctor's daughter. She brought radish for Sunder, which I asked her to put in its cage, carefully and from a distance away. Maya said that she would hand them in, but Sunder jumped on her hand, held the radish with one hand and caught hold of her arm in other. We shouted loudly and a gardener heard us — he came and helped us free Maya of the monkey's grip. The poor girl could not go to school for many days. Her father, Dr. Gurjit Singh, worked hard to heal his daughter's arm. After that, we never went near Sunder's cage.

Our father prepared to take us all to Lahore. Our elder brother Harcharan Singh was a sub-inspector in Lahore police. Our sister-in-law was also in Lahore. We went to Lahore, and visited a lot of places like Dabbi Bazaar, Baoli Sahib, the zoo, the museum, the tomb of Maharaja Ranjit Singh and Shalimar Bagh. We were excited to see the animals in the zoo. We saw a lion and lioness and their cub. The lion would jump extremely high but the iron bars keeping them in were folded to sharp points. So, when he would jump at them, he would be hurt, and would turn back. There was a hippopotamus in the water. We threw money at it. It would retrieve the money from the water and keep it outside. We kept playing with the animals for a long time, and then saw peacocks with beautiful feathers and designs on their tails. We saw tumbling pigeons playing around.

While playing, we accidentally disturbed a hive of bees. None of us was harmed but brother Mohinder Singh got stung on his eye. His eye swelled up. Our father got a photograph of all of us clicked. We were photographed by Lahora Singh, a famous photographer. I held my nephew, Davinder, in my arms. He loved me a lot. Lahora Singh was also an artist — he had painted a lot of portraits of Guru Nanak Dev ji. He used to sell photocopies<sup>35</sup> of his paintings.

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We returned to Kartarpur after visiting Lahore. The elephants of the Raja of Kapurthala would be brought to Kartarpur for the fair of Baisakhi. Atma Singh, who was the Tikka Sahib, would sit on the elephant.<sup>36</sup> The elephants' backs would be elaborately covered with velvet cloth embroidered with golden or silver thread, and a silver seat would be placed on it for the procession. The Baisakhi of Kartarpur was famous. The Jatts would emerge from the villages,

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<sup>35</sup> The text reads 'photo copyaan' or photocopies, an English word rendered in Gurmukhi script. This is anachronistic as the photocopier as we know it today had not yet been invented.

<sup>36</sup> Tikka Sahib here means heir to the Sodhis' line.

and sing songs while clanging cymbals and beating drums. ‘Guru Naunihal Singh has installed stairways to heaven’, they would sing. The wife of the Guru would bedeck a servant with fine clothes and jewellery, and make her stand in the upper gallery. The Jatts would greatly enjoy seeing her and call out to her from below.

We would get our turn to ride the elephants after the procession left in the evening. Us three brothers and sister, and the young Sahib would sit on the elephant for strolls. We would climb on the elephant but would become sleepy once it would cover some distance. We would ride the elephant for two to three miles and then return. In this way, we spent the days of childhood. Now my brothers were admitted in Class Three.

Chapter 3  
**A Mountain of Troubles**  
 Phillaur (1917-1920)

(P. 33)

We got transferred to Phillaur city. A mountain of troubles fell on us and our happy life changed...Our final exams were conducted after a few months of reaching Phillaur. Both brothers were promoted to Class Four. I remember that my mother was sitting on a *peehai*, when both the sons came to hug her and tell her that they had passed. Mother lovingly looked at them, smiled and hugged them tightly to quip, “You study well, so you will never fail.”

Oh yes, I remember one incident when mother had gone to the old portion of the house and was performing the *Sukh Asana* of the Guru Granth Sahib,<sup>37</sup> when she suddenly returned and asked, “Did you call me?” She sounded confused, and claimed she heard someone calling her name and asking her to go with them. We told her we had not called her, and this incident was ignored.

A plague outbreak overtook some places in the middle of *Vaisakh*; people left their houses to live elsewhere. Father also asked us to vacate the main house and live in the outhouse. Sister-in-law Basant Kaur had borne a son who was three days old. Mother had fever. Father was away on tour...her throat started aching by the third day of fever.

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Father returned, called the doctor. Upon examining her the doctor informed us that she was afflicted with a tumour of plague in her throat; we were all thus sent to live in Zail House.

One day, I was sitting with Mother when she suddenly began laughing and singing hymns, saying, “Your day has come closer.”<sup>38</sup> I was surprised. She told me to recite hymns, kept saying, “See there’s the Diwan of Kalgidhar,<sup>39</sup> Guru ji is sitting on the throne amidst hymns being sung.” Scared, I left. I approached Father and shared my worries about Mother with him. Father asked her, “What do you desire?” to which she responded, “Please organise an *Akhand Path* but it should be performed near me so that I can hear the scriptures.”<sup>40</sup> The *Akhand Path* soon began, along with the provision of langar — any poor person could come and partake of it.

The *Akhand Path* culminated on the third day, and so did the langar. Mother could not swallow anything, but she was immensely blessed by Guruji. She took *Karah Parshad* and a glass full of *amrit* from the *kumbh*. The doctor was working extremely hard. He would rarely

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<sup>37</sup> Also *Santokh*: ritual of closing the Guru Granth Sahib after completing the evening prayers.

<sup>38</sup> Common saying connoting death, day implies ‘final day’.

<sup>39</sup> Referring to the tenth Sikh Guru, Guru Gobind Singh. *Kalgidhar* is translated as one who wears the *kalgi* or the peacock feather.

<sup>40</sup> *Akhand Path* refers to the performance of the entire scriptures of the Guru Granth Sahib, often completed within three days. This Sikh tradition evolved from the pragmatics of warfare, where Sikh guerrilla fighters were said to read the *Gurbani* (lit. Guru’s word) quickly, while on horseback.



leave for home. He operated on her and extracted the tumour. Mother was very brave, she accepted being operated upon without anaesthesia...

We used to visit her twice a day. Four days before she passed away, she told Father, "Please do not spoil my last days, I humbly request you to not bring my children before me"—she saw us all for the last time and turned her face away. She told Father, "Now you bring them up, my relationship with them is now over." The next day, which was the eighth day since she had fallen ill, the doctor informed us that she would die by 2 am. In the evening, Father asked her, "What do you desire now?" She replied, "The loud recitation of *Sri Sukhmani* Sahib."<sup>41</sup> They called the priest that very moment...He started reciting the prayers loudly, and asked, "Can you hear them?" She laughed and recited some lines along his recitation...She called Brothers Harbans Singh and Harcharan Singh, and Uncle Charanjit Singh, saying that she wanted to meet them, three days before she passed away — she passed away while listening to prayers and chanting *Waheguru, Waheguru*...

We were all sleeping in the Zail House, but I do not know what happened to me then. I got up and ran. Someone caught hold of me and made me sit, but I said, "Let me go, my Mother is no more."

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I was consoled and made to keep sitting, I could not sleep. We were brought to the main house in the morning. All five of us hugged our Mother's body. Our youngest sister, the poor child Mohinder Kaur, was only two-and-a-half years old when she lost her mother. She did not understand anything. Harkrishan was only six years old.

We were detached from our Mother with great difficulty. Father was also weeping a lot. Mother was bathed. She was dressed in a white shirt, white salwar, lilac dupatta. She was looking very beautiful. We believed that she would speak then, but who would have spoken? She was carried to the cremation ground amid hymns; her body was covered with flowers. We cried a lot, were in a bad state, but were taken care of. We got tired of crying...Mother was cremated near the banks of the Satluj river. Our happy times had disappeared with the passing of our mother. Some people influenced Father to get remarried. A teacher named Puran Kaur was suggested as a good match.

One day, I said, "Father, I have come to know that you are going to marry Purni." He replied, "Yes, I think I should get married. Purni is a good woman."<sup>42</sup> I said, "No, she is a characterless woman, that is why I was not sent to her for further studies." He said, "Who will take care of you?" I said, "I will take care of my brothers and sister. I will also take care of you. Please call Punjabi and do not get remarried."<sup>43</sup> Father was quiet, and surprised that a twelve-year-old girl had said all this so fearlessly. But ultimately Father got remarried to a woman named Balwant Kaur who was renamed as Gurbaksh Kaur after marriage. Father also stopped loving us. We could not even live together.

<sup>41</sup> A *bani* composed by the fifth Sikh Guru, Guru Arjan Dev Ji.

<sup>42</sup> Purni is a short form of Puran Kaur's name.

<sup>43</sup> Punjabi was the name of their servant.

My stepmother started running her empire. Gurbaksh Kaur was from a poor family, and her father was a miser. Children's personalities are determined by their fathers' traits. The first thing she did was to reduce the amount of milk the children were consuming. So, the milk for Harkrishan and Mindo was stopped.<sup>44</sup> Our youngest sister Mindo was only two and a half years old, the poor girl would ask for milk — I would cry on her behalf. I would give her buttermilk instead and ask her to drink that, but Mindo would refuse to drink the buttermilk.

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I would miss my mother the whole day...and cry. My stepmother also disliked me. I was not sent to school after my mother died. Brother Harcharan Singh had tried to convince Father to not get remarried, but he did not listen. So, Brother stopped talking to him. Sister-in-law Basant also left a week after my Father's marriage.

My Bebe ji<sup>45</sup> planned to send both the elder sons to a boarding school, and so they were sent away by Father. They would visit home only on Sundays and return to school on Monday. I was so lonely and upset. Some months passed like this.

My finger developed a boil. It was so painful that I could not sleep. I cried as I hugged my brothers when they were visiting on Sunday. I told them, "Brothers, please do not leave now. I'll die crying if you go. I keep on crying through the night, I'll not let you go." I told the peon Bachan Singh, "Take the horse-cart and bring the boys' luggage back from the hostel. They will not go back now." The luggage was brought back and all five of us were together again. We were happy when our brothers returned. They kept caressing my aching hand. Abdullah, the compounder, was called the next day. He treated my boil. I gave him a black hen as payment so that he would not hurt me while operating on my finger. We began playing together again, but we had to spend many days cleaning the boys' lice-infested hair. Now Father rented a house in the city — we all shifted there. It was a beautiful large house. There was a tall peepal tree near the house where a family of vultures used to live.

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We used to pelt stones at the vulture chicks, to which they would cry much to our joy. Once, when we were throwing stones, the vulture parents started attacking us and we became so terrified that we ran upstairs and hid in a room. We never troubled the chicks after that.

Our Bebe ji gave birth to a still-born girl child. She was taken to Brown Hospital, Ludhiana for surgery. I and my younger sister were also taken along. Bebe ji's mother also accompanied her. There was nothing much for me to do there. A patient from Patiala who looked like my mother lay in the adjoining room. I used to watch her very intently. One day, her mother asked me, "Why do you look at her all the time?" I started crying and said, "My mother looked exactly like her. When I look at her, I feel emotionally strong." Both of them also started crying.

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<sup>44</sup> Mindo is a pet name for their sister Mohinder Kaur.

<sup>45</sup> Referring to their step-mother.

We returned to Phillaur after one month. My Uncle Charanjit Singh came and informed Father of the horrible treatment meted out to his children. He told him that if he could not care for his children properly, he would take them with him and bring them up. My Father was surprised because he had never realized that someone would point out his mistakes. Now he started being affectionate to us, and he realized that his marriage was a mistake. Brother started getting meat every day. He would ask, “Did you get milk? Did you get meat?” We were now living better than before, and I started talking to my father. I had not talked to him for six months. I would hide in his presence. I had begun hating him which he turned into love with continuous efforts to win my affection.

A young Patwari named Nand Singh of Birk village was engaged to teach my brothers. He taught with a lot of love and patience. One of my brothers’ friends who was from a *Tarkhan* family, Saran Singh also used to study with them, but he would be sleepy all the time, causing him to even fall off his bench once. In order to keep him awake, Nand Singh decided to tie his topknot to the wooden beam above. When he did not stop sleeping even then, Nand Singh commented,

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“A widow’s son and a merchant’s horse eat a lot but walk little.” Jan Muhammad was the Headmaster of the Government High School. He taught history to classes four and five. Mohinder was very skilled at learning Urdu, Persian, Geography and History. But he was weak at Mathematics. Mohinder had the habit of responding with information while Jan Muhammad taught, mentioning facts which Jan Muhammad intended to state. Instead of encouraging a bright student, Jan Muhammad would punish him.

Rajinder was fond of flying kites and playing cricket. Jagdish, Roshan Lal and Meher Chand were their playmates. Mohinder was not keen to play but would be happy watching others playing games. He preferred to read Urdu books.

Father rented a house on the outskirts of the town. Sardar Shiv Narain Singh ‘Moranwale’ was one of our neighbours. They used to keep baskets full of mangoes in the backyard of their store. We used to join other children and steal their mangoes.

My brothers loved horse-riding. Whenever the village numberdars visited the Tehsil, they would tie their horses to the sheesham trees near Zail House. Rajinder and Mohinder would untie the horses and ride them. Their friends, Rashid and Hamid who were *Salotery*’s sons would also join them.<sup>46</sup> The boys greatly enjoyed this mischief.

The villages of Phillaur held fairs after the wheat was harvested. The Dalit women of the village used to be the main attraction of these fairs.<sup>47</sup> They would sit on the balconies or stand on the rooftops, and the Jatts would sing and dance, make noises to get their attention, and throw fruit at them. Some of them would create a ruckus in their drunkenness. They would express their hidden desires this way and return to the back-breaking labour of farming later.

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<sup>46</sup> *Salotery*: caste name.

<sup>47</sup> *Chamar*: caste slur today, used to refer to Dalits.

Many Jatts from the villages of Phillaur would go to America and Canada to perform labour. They would make money and visit the Tehsil and police station to get their passports attested. They would wear coats and people used to call them ‘Milkani.’<sup>48</sup>

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The wedding of my brother Harbans Singh was fixed. We had to go to Bodlan for the marriage. We were very excited. We got ready and boarded a train from the Phillaur station. We had many trunks but the trunks containing the jewellery and clothes for the bride were left on the platform. We only realized that when we reached Jalandhar. One of Father’s peons took care of it. He kept sitting on them. Father made us sit in the waiting room and returned via the next train to bring the trunk along.

We went to the village after Father returned. An elephant from the Maharaja of Kapurthala was brought for the wedding procession; a hundred mares, horse-carts, entertainers, and bands of musicians were also part of the procession. We reached the bride’s place on the fourth day. The animals were properly fed after which it was time to show off the power of money. My uncle started showing currency as part of the wedding rituals, he was not stopped because they wanted to check how much cash he was carrying. So, many Dalits began picking up the thrown money, creating chaos.<sup>49</sup> That is when the relatives of the girl requested our uncle to stop showering money.

Father said that he wanted to get his son married through the *Anand Karaj*, but the girl’s uncle wanted to do *Vedi Pheras*.<sup>50</sup> Father threatened to break the engagement, but the girl’s brothers agreed to marriage with Anand Karaj. But, when we reached there in the morning, *Vedi* was being prepared. All the *baraatis* took off their shoes in the *Vedi*, much to the pandit’s chagrin — he left. Father had taken along the *ragis*. The Guru Granth Sahib was installed there with full ceremony and the Anand Karaj ceremony was performed. The procession returned on the fourth day. Our sister-in-law arrived in a *doli* decorated with golden borders. Eight palanquin-bearers and one bridesmaid had come along. We were happy to see our sister-in-law; I was especially happy. I thought, “I will have a friend now.”

We returned to Phillaur after the wedding, but sister-in-law did not accompany us. I was lonely but hoped that she would come soon. I was soon being taught the Guru Granth Sahib.

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There was a Namdhari woman, Uttam Kaur, a widow who lovingly taught me how to read the scriptures.<sup>51</sup> She used to make strings of woollen beads and gift them to the Singhs.<sup>52</sup> A flock of sheep used to pass through our backyard. Once, we took one sheep and kept it in a room.

<sup>48</sup> Teasing reference for outsiders.

<sup>49</sup> *Chura*: (in the original text) Caste slur for Dalits today.

<sup>50</sup> *Anand Karaj*: Sikh marriage ceremony, *Vedi Pheras*: Hindu marriage ceremony.

<sup>51</sup> Namdhari is a sect of Sikhism.

<sup>52</sup> Beads for chanting the name of God, and Singhs here refers to the religious Sardars, as opposed to the general usage of ‘Singh’ or Sikh man.

We sheared the sheep's wool with scissors the next day and let it go. We gave that wool to Uttam Kaur to make strings of beads. We did not know that these sacred strings could not be made with stolen wool, and we also did not think that we had stolen something. We had been performing a virtuous deed.

Chapter 4  
**Una**  
(1920-1921)

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We got transferred to Una from Phillaur. I still miss the beautiful valley of Una. The journey from Phillaur to Una was very fascinating. There were no cars or buses in those days. We travelled in a tonga from Jalandhar to Hoshiarpur. We crossed the *choe* of Masrala with great difficulty. Hoshiarpur was an unplanned city back then. A road stretched from the city to the District courts, it was lined by eucalyptus trees on both sides. They had been planted by an English Deputy Commissioner. These trees infused life into the city. Bungalows of lawyers and officers were built on both sides of the road. We spent the night in the house of the barrister Sardar Harbakhsh Singh. He was a friend of our father's.

We resumed our journey to Una via tonga the next day. We crossed a *choe* to reach the foothills of the Shivalik. Only aliyar plants, which animals avoid eating, grew on the hills. We halted in the bungalow of Bankhandi on the way. One can see a picturesque vision of the hills from this bungalow. Dhauladhar looks like a wall of ice. We eventually reached a *sua* surrounded by the beauty of the mountains. This swells with the water of many rivulets and becomes dangerous during the monsoon season.

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A row of eucalyptus trees bordered the road to Una. This had been planted by the same English Deputy Commissioner, the tree-lover who had beautified the city of Hoshiarpur by planting these tall trees kissing the sky.

The Tehsildar's house was located at the mouth of the town. It had two courtyards. While one courtyard lay within, surrounded by four pucca rooms on three faces, the other one, used by Father to meet visitors was located outside. *Bahatis* lived right across the street.<sup>53</sup> A young Bahati girl lived there, her admirers would form a crowd in the evening.

The Tehsil was in a fort-like building. This had been the fort of Bedi Sahib Singh during the Sikh regime. There are houses of *Bedis* nearby and their ancestor Kaladhari's tomb is located there. It has paintings of *janam sakhi* on its walls.<sup>54</sup> Baba Kaladhari was a resident of Dera Baba Nanak, he shifted to Salaru village with his family. He began meditating in a forest. Soon, the locals started following him as a spiritual authority. Raja Ram Singh of Amb and the Sardars of Santokhgarh used to fight with each other over their territories. Baba Kaladhari mediated between them and resolved their dispute. Satisfied with his decision, they gifted the hill bordering their territory to Baba ji, which is where he established the town of Una.

The Bedis have a copy of the Guru Granth Sahib, which has been embellished by painters from Kashmir. This was gifted to Bedi Sahib Singh by Maharaja Ranjit Singh. The Maharaja revered Sahib Singh, which was greatly appreciated by Sikhs. In 1850, Sahib Singh's

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<sup>53</sup> *Bahati*: also called *Ghirth*, is a Hindu agricultural caste from Himachal Pradesh, India.

<sup>54</sup> *Janam Sakhi*: life stories of Sikh Gurus.

son Bikram Singh rebelled against the British. When the British Army was moving towards Una, Bikram Singh erected tall hedges of thorns at all the boundaries of Una. The British Army easily plucked and destroyed these hedges and entered Una. This story is still popularly shared in Una — the residents make fun of his stupidity till date.

Father got both the brothers admitted in Sanatan Dharam High School near Tehsil.<sup>55</sup> Studies were imparted in the form of religious education along with the normal curriculum there. A pandit named Vishnu taught them the ‘Sahansar’. Mohinder could not understand it but he memorised the whole scripture. Rajinder and a Muslim boy, Mubarak, refused to learn it — they were punished as a result.

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They were taught English by Master Chaggu Ram. A patriot, he used to ask the boys about what they would do when they would win swaraj.<sup>56</sup> The boys were unable to answer. I asked the same question to the Jatts of Bodlan. They answered, “We will cut all the old sheesham trees near the road.” Una was also well-known for having 84 stairs. These stairs climb to the north and are surrounded by temples on the sides. Some pilgrims recite the *Sukhmani Sahib* on every stair because they believe that they would escape the cycle of 84 lakh births by doing so.<sup>57</sup>

We used to walk to the sua from Una. At times, Tibetan Lamas would cross us. The Lamas and the women in the group would carry flags with terrifying designs drawn on them, and we would hide under a small bridge as they passed. It was said that Lamas kidnap small children.

In those days, Edgar Abraham was the Deputy Commissioner of Hoshiarpur. He was a decent man, and his wife was very fond of painting. She painted beautiful landscapes and portraits of women and children. Mohinder would accompany her whenever she would visit Una and carry her box of paints.

A young man lived in the small house in front of the dak-bungalow. He created quite a stir in Una. He was a Hindu man married to a Dalit woman.<sup>58</sup> He converted to Christianity to escape the harassment he faced because of his marriage. Schoolboys would trouble him and ask, “What is the name of Jesus’s father?” He could not answer.

We met Dr. Harbhajan Singh at Una. He was a friend of our stepmother’s brother, Dr. Raghbir Singh. We used to call him *Mama ji*. Bebe ji and Dr. Harbhajan Singh belonged to the Grewal sub-caste. We used to visit each other. Both the families would go for walks together. Doctor sahib would meet us every day and ask, “All well?” We would excitedly wait for his visits.

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<sup>55</sup> Tehsil, as indicated in the glossary, has dual meanings: it refers to the area of administration as well as to the office of the Tehsil. Here, Tehsil implies the office.

<sup>56</sup> Self-rule, see *swaraj* in the context of Gandhian politics and Congress demands.

<sup>57</sup> *Sukhmani Sahib*: part of the *Guru Granth Sahib* and composed by the fifth Sikh Guru, Guru Arjan Dev. 84 lakh births or *joonian* refers to the inescapable cycle of birth and death that all living beings are condemned to pass through before they can attain salvation from this cycle, or *moksha*.

Commonly cited in Hindu scripture and interpretations, this idea is also articulated by some Sikhs.

<sup>58</sup> Uses *Churi* in the original, is a caste slur today.

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We would roast corncobs and serve them to him. He could break corn cobs into three parts by pressing them between his fingers, leaving us amazed. While I spun yarn on the spinning wheel, he would say, “Bibi, I will increase the speed of your wheel so you can work faster.” He experimented on it but was not successful.

Doctor sahib had two daughters. The elder daughter’s name was Iqbal, while the younger one was called Kirpal. He loved his daughters a lot. Iqbal was an innocent girl; she would play in our house the whole day. She would call Father ‘*Vadde Babu ji*’.<sup>59</sup> We were very fond of her. Rajinder and Mohinder would always go to the hospital after returning from school, and would bring Iqbal home. There was a huge mirror in our house. She would sit before it, and then we’d asked her, “Look who is sitting there?” She would laugh at the mirror, and we would say, “See it is a monkey!” She believed that we were being truthful. I would also visit them at times. Iqbal was a young, innocent child. Some patients would bring her sweets, to her father’s concern. He had taught her to not accept sweets from strangers, but she often forgot that.

Punjabi took us to the sua during a solar eclipse. She made us stand in the water and recite scriptures until the eclipse ended. She brought us home afterwards.

Punjabi made our lives very comfortable — she loved us immensely and was a very good-natured soul. We were all sitting together one evening. Father also sat there, completing his official work. Both the brothers were studying. Punjabi was warming milk for us in the kitchen. Father broke wind and Punjabi started laughing. We joined in her laughter by leaving the room one after another and laughing our heads off. Our laughter was uncontrollable. We returned after two hours and could not even drink milk. This is how we spent our time with Punjabi.

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One of our peons was named Hamir Singh. He loved singing hymns to the rhythm of the drum. We would accompany him by singing Bhagat Namdev’s hymn ‘*Parh Padosan Poochhe Nama Ke/ Pehe Chand Chawai Ho/ Tu Pai Dugani Deho Majoori/ Mai Ko Bedhi Keh Badhai Ho*’.<sup>60</sup> This is how we spent a few months — singing hymns, playing, and taking long walks.

Sri Anandpur Sahib and Bhabor Sahib also lie in Tehsil Una. We would accompany our father whenever he visited these sacred places. Bhabor is situated on the banks of the Satluj, and Nangal is located across it. There is a gurdwara of Guru Gobind Singh ji here, and the river flows just beneath the gurdwara. Guru ji was a lover of nature and his gurdwaras are present in beautiful locales like Paonta and Godavari. Bhabor is a sacred place for Hindus, there are five large boulders at the banks of the river. People say that these were the stones used by the Pandavas to play the game of *chaupath*.<sup>61</sup> The men and women of the hills descend to celebrate

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<sup>59</sup> Lit. ‘Elder Father’, term of respect and relation.

<sup>60</sup> Rough paraphrase: The woman neighbour asks Namdev, who has built this beautiful house? I will give more money to the architect than you did, just tell me who he is. This is followed by Namdev’s answer that the one who has made it cannot be priced.

<sup>61</sup> From the epic *Mahabharata*.



the Baisakhi fair at these banks. Women dress in colourful clothes and sit on the stones near the banks of the river, men try to charm them by dancing and singing.

Every time Father would visit a gurdwara he would return home and send us all to visit it. He requested the Bedis for a tonga. We left for Bhabor Sahib with Brother Harbans Singh. We stayed there overnight and listened to hymns. I was so enthralled by it that I feel it affect my soul even today, even though I do not remember the lyrics of that hymn.

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We bathed in the Satluj river later. There were many monkeys there, they would copy us talking to each other. We returned to Una the next day.

Guru Tegh Bahadur ji founded Anandpur Sahib. It was formerly called Makhawal. The stunning hills of Naina Devi form its backdrop. There are many gurdwaras in Anandpur Sahib. Guru Tegh Bahadur ji used to reside in *Guru Ke Mahal*. The Guru would meditate in a room in the basement. When he was martyred by Aurangzeb in Delhi, his head was brought to Anandpur Sahib by a *Lobana* Sikh. A raised platform has been constructed where his head was cremated, and it is called 'Akal Bunga'.<sup>62</sup> Keshgarh Sahib is the most famous gurdwara. This is where Guru Gobind Singh performed 'Amrit Paan' to the five *Pyaare*.<sup>63</sup> Guru Sahib was coronated as a Guru at gurdwara Damdama Sahib.

There is a *dera* of Baba Vadbhag Singh in Tehsil Una. Women unhappy in their marital lives come here and undergo black magic rituals — they shake their heads with hair open. Some of them are beaten by the mahants with *chimte*. They stay here for two to three days, express themselves fully, feel lighter and return. This *dera* receives a lot of donations. Mahants hide 25 paise and 50 paise in the prasad and offer it to their relatives. When Father came to know of this, he gathered large amounts of prasad and collected change.

A boy was born to our Bebe ji after some days. Her mother came to look after her, Punjabi was also called for this purpose. But the boy fell ill after eight days — he was turning either blue or yellow. He died when he was eighteen days old. A woman from the city arrived to take care of the corpse of the child. Our Bebe ji was bathed after a few days, her clothes were changed. That day, Punjabi left me at Doctor sahib's home and told me to leave only when she would come to pick me up.

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The poor woman greatly cared for me.

Punjabi also left for her house after some days. Bebe ji did not want to keep her because she sympathised with us. She had been living with us for many years.

Some days after Punjabi left, Father kept getting bouts of hiccups — one day passed, then another, but the hiccups did not stop. Doctor sahib tried different cures, but nothing worked. He suggested that we should go to Hoshiarpur for treatment. We collected our bare necessities and set off. Father was very weak. We climbed into a tonga. Brother Amrik Singh

<sup>62</sup> Raised platform or *Thada* in the original.

<sup>63</sup> Refer to the story of Baisakhi and the 'Panj Pyaare' in the Sikh tradition for further background.

and Doctor sahib accompanied us on horses. Father was carried on a stretcher by twelve bearers. The sua was overflowing with water because of the monsoon. We crossed it with great difficulty and stayed at the bungalow of Bankhandi for the night. We got Mohinder and Rajinder's names removed from the school list and took their transfer certificates. We reached Hoshiarpur the next day. Dr. Harbhajan Singh asked the Civil Surgeon to examine my father. He was kept there for a week and then sent to Lahore. We were taken to Bodlan by our uncles. Bebe ji was with us. Doctor sahib went to Lahore with Father and got him admitted. Brother Amrik Singh, and Gurdit Singh, a cousin, stayed with Father. It is said that a tube was inserted in his mouth and the wound was taken care of. Father slept peacefully after that, after which the Doctor gave him a cup of milk. Father slept for twelve hours straight — everybody was worried until he woke up. He then said, "I feel better."

## Chapter 5

### **Bodlan**

1921

(P. 48)

We came to Bodlan. I think Father stayed at Lahore for one month. Then he returned to the village. He lived in the village for about one year — he was so weak; he could not even rise from the bed by himself. He was administered health tonics and oil massages. He was greatly cared for by our brothers Amrik Singh and Gurdit Singh. He would be assisted by two people to walk, in the beginning, it took him one month to walk without assistance. But he could not regain his original health. He used to say, ‘God has saved my life for the sake of these children. They would be nowhere without me.’

We resided in the village through the winter. Mohinder, Rajinder and Harkrishan began going to Balgadi Arya School. Mindo, our younger sister stayed at home — nobody bothered to teach her anything. I used to teach her Gurmukhi at home. I was engaged in performing household chores the whole day. Our Bebe ji would not do anything. She would care for Father, though Father did not like her much. She was very talkative which Father did not like. She did not care for cleanliness, while Father was careful about cleanliness. But man lives through the choices he makes.

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Since I was living in the village, I would invite my friends and spin the spinning wheel together. We would spin the whole night, and bathe at the well in the house every morning at 4 a.m. after which everyone would leave. I was the fastest at spinning out of all the girls.

I asked Father to buy primers for me.<sup>64</sup> I taught these girls from these primers during daytime — this is how we lived in the village for many months. Wheat was expensive that year, while rice and sugar were quite cheap. We could buy 5 kgs of sugar for 1 Rupee. Most people consumed rice and sugar.

My brothers would get ready to leave for school at the crack of dawn. They would carry chapatti and mango pickle wrapped in a cloth napkin, and have stale chapatti with jaggery and butter as breakfast before leaving for school. The school was three miles away from our village. They would pass through the choe near Kheda Kotli village, reach Hoshiarpur Dasuya road, walk on an unmetalled road to village Balaggan, and reach school. The Persian teacher Lala Shyam Lal would sympathise with their long journeys. Lala Shadi Lal was the headmaster — he was a good administrator. The boys would have their lunch under the shade of the sheesham trees in the afternoon.

They would tease one another, laugh, and make their journeys from school to home interesting. Some boys did not even have slippers, so to protect their feet from the hot, sandy choe, they would tie *akk* leaves to their feet with old pieces of cloth.

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<sup>64</sup> *Qayde* in the original. A *qayda* is a primer with alphabets for young children to learn language.

Rajinder Singh was a friend of my brother's. He belonged to the Sodhi family — he was a careless and lost boy. He frequently kept moong dal *pinni* in his coat pockets but forget to button his coat. His *pinni* was very easily stolen by the other boys, which he never realized. There was a Muslim Pir's dera on their way to school. Sodhi Rajinder Singh would spend the whole day there and return home in the evening. His family kept believing that he was studying hard.

Many boys of Jatt families would return home and work in the fields. My brother's classmate Karam Singh would carry loads of cow-fodder on his head. My brothers also tried this but felt that this was the most difficult of the chores.

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One loses one's intellect when such heavy burdens are carried on the head. The amount of energy these sons of landlords would expend in carrying cow-fodder on their heads would go to waste. I think this extreme hard work keeps them from excelling in the field of education. Walks are useful for people who sit on chairs all day. But people who work in the fields do not have the energy for leisure walks.

Wrestling was a popular game in those days. Wrestlers were important people. There were three wrestlers in our village. Raju was the eldest — he was fair, had a muscular body, and was as tall as a giant but was emotionally weak. He never fought bravely during matches. He would lose his senses upon entering the ring. He won very rarely. Usually, he would keep lying down, causing the other competitor to try to rouse him — these matches would last hours, and then declared as ties. Arjan was another wrestler. He had retired as a Hawaldar from the Army. We were very fond of him. He would enter the ring enthusiastically and generally win the match. He started living with a Dalit woman.<sup>65</sup> Although their relationship was dishonourable for the Dalits, they were scared to denounce him. Milkhi was the funniest among the wrestlers of the village. He would lift a 5 *maund* rock during the festival of Baisakhi. It was a long rock to which iron rods were tied. Milkhi dressed in a red *langot*, lifted the rock, and threw it back. Spectators would shower money on him in amazement. Our Uncle Mehar Singh would gift him a sack of almonds.

Milkhi used to teach exercises to my brothers. He would massage them and wrestle with them. He was very talkative — all his friends enjoyed his company. He was especially fond of Mohinder. Both of them would hunt drakes with Rajinder Sodhi.<sup>66</sup> They would go to see wrestling matches and village fairs in 'Bhada'.

In Mukerian, the paddy fields are called 'Bhada'. This region had very harsh winters. They would spend cold nights in straw huts, wrap themselves in blankets and lie on the straw. The farmers welcomed guests as warmly as they could, given their poor economic condition. They would serve boiled rice, lentils, ghee and jaggery to visitors if nothing else was available. This area was festering with mosquitoes. The people of the village would burn dung cakes so their smoke could rid the land of mosquitoes.

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<sup>65</sup> *Chamari* in the original, again, a caste slur today.

<sup>66</sup> Drakes: *Murghabi* in the original.

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Once, Mohinder and Milkhi reached ‘Gagan ji *da tilla*’ while visiting the villages.<sup>67</sup> This is a special sign of the ‘Dhar of Shivalik’. An old Banyan tree on this hill was visible from miles away. Now it has disappeared — perhaps it was uprooted by a storm. There is a large Ashram under this hill where a fair takes place. Pahari women would come from distant places to beautify this Ashram. Groups of Jatts from villages in the plains would come here for *darshan* and perform *boliyan*.

On some days, our wrestlers Milkhi, Bishna and Arjan would cover their faces with cloth, and walk along the Dasuya road to loot things used by women for dressing up — clips, make-up, and the like. They would distribute parandi, strings of beads and bangles among their girlfriends, and lovers among the Pahari and Dogri women. These wrestlers would also take their share of melons at night during the melon season. The people of the village would consider these antics ‘adventure’ or ‘fun’.<sup>68</sup> The unity of the village was so strong that the police would never gather the courage to step into it.

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<sup>67</sup> Or Gagan ji’s hillock.

<sup>68</sup> These quoted words are English words written in Punjabi in the text.

Chapter 6  
**Muktsar**  
(1922-1925)

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Father felt better. He went to meet the Commissioner of Jalandhar. The Sahib appointed him to Muktsar in 1922. Father was happy because the Muktsar posting was given to Tehsildars who the Government was pleased with. Father was very honest and hard-working. The Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner were pleased with him.

Father began preparing to leave for Muktsar. The story of Muktsar is as follows: forty Sikhs from Majha who had abandoned support for Guru Gobind Singh ji returned to the land of Muktsar and asked for his forgiveness. They fought for him against the Mughals and sacrificed their lives. This place came to be called Muktsar because they had attained ‘mukti’ here, freedom from fear. I was very fond of my cousin Dhanti. I wanted her to come along with us; I asked for Father’s permission and he agreed. Her mother also accepted my request and gave her permission. We got ready, packed our luggage. We took one rooster, a horse, buffaloes, and a cow along with us. We boarded the passenger train while the luggage and livestock were kept in the goods train. We passed Kapurthala and Faridkot stations on our way. The Faridkot Palace was visible from the station, Father informed us.

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We got down at Kotakpura Station, had a meal, and waited for the next train which would take us to Muktsar.

We were received at the station by many people. We sat in a tonga and reached the residence of the Tehsildar. The house was built in half kutchra and half pucca form. It was very spacious, there was also a pond nearby. This house was an old fort, dating back to the Sikh empire. There was a burj nearby. The house had two divisions for residence and another for livestock apart from a sitting room.

We excitedly visited the gurdwara. We did not realize that the same place would soon become a source of irony — a place of happiness, and a place of sorrow when we would be orphaned. We did not know then that we would have to leave our beloved father in Muktsar for eternity. We would not even see his cremation ground. No one can speculate when sorrow will befall a peaceful life.

Rajinder, Mohinder and Harkrishan were admitted in the Khalsa School. Mohinder Kaur, Debo, Bachno and Dyal were admitted into a primary school. We began living very happily. We properly learned the Punjabi language because of the influence of the Khalsa School.

The headmaster of Khalsa School, Sardar Harbhagat Singh, was a hard-working and disciplined man. He taught simplicity to his students — if a student tried to act fashionable, he would dirty his salwar by wiping his shoes on it. The school building had not been completed yet; the headmaster assigned all students to collect funds for it. Mohinder took interest in this work. He would always keep the receipt book along with him, and whenever he would see

well-dressed people in the market, he would ask them for donations. He collected 300 Rupees this way and contributed to the building fund.

Once, the English play 'Julius Caesar' by Shakespeare was enacted in the school. Mohinder played the role of Mark Antony. It was a difficult part but Mohinder memorised fifteen pages of long speeches and successfully performed the role.

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The school emphasized on religious education; religious hymns were sung before classes were held. A thin, weak, and tall person would perform as the lead singer. He would shut his eyes and sing the hymns; his Adam's apple would bob up and down. The boys used to call him 'Kirla Giani'.<sup>69</sup>

The science laboratory was not very well-stocked. When boys would accidentally break test-tubes during science experiments, the broken equipment would be hidden in the back of the almirah while new ones would be placed in the front — so, the almirah always appeared full. The laboratory was shown as well-equipped and well-stocked to the School Inspector. Once, when Mohinder was performing an experiment with oxygen and iron powder, he accidentally broke the cylinder. This small accident stopped the experiment, because he was not given new equipment.

If the Khalsa School of Muktsar is compared with the good schools of modern days, it would be last on the list. It did not have a good library or good furniture. The teachers were very ordinary. The boys from this school who performed outstanding tasks later in life, should be the only ones credited for their achievement. When Mohinder was in Class 10, he started a handwritten newspaper called 'Khalsa High School Times'— it had school news and an editorial. He wrote three editions of this newspaper himself.

There were *peepal* trees around the walking path surrounding the pond in Muktsar, and saints, *fakirs* and *Nihangs* used to sit in the shade of the trees. One of the saints was extremely popular. He had a long beard, knotted hair, and long nails on his left hand. The people would call him 'Dhatta Saadh'. He maintained a register which he called 'Sachkhand Register'. Schoolboys would enter their names into the register and pay one *anna* each to the saint.

We used to recite *shabad kirtan* in the evening.<sup>70</sup> We were accompanied by Amar Kaur and sister-in-law Harnam Kaur in our recitation. Rajinder sang very well. Father would make him sit with him in the evenings and listen to him singing Urdu ghazals.

‘Aata hai yaad mujhko, guzra hua zamaana,  
Wo jharian chaman ki, who mera ashiana.’<sup>71</sup>

<sup>69</sup> *Kirla*: lizard, *Giani*: Priest, used to tease him.

<sup>70</sup> As mentioned before, the voices of Mohinder Singh and his sister merge in the first few chapters, to the extent that they need to be separated by the reader to clarify who is providing the details. For example, details of school life are added and edited by Mohinder Singh, because his sister was not sent to school.

<sup>71</sup> ‘I remember the times passed, those bushes of flowers, that house of mine.’

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Both the brothers studied in the burj. Father would set their clock such that it would be delayed by one hour. When I would go to check on them, they would ask, “Bibi, the Tehsil clock has struck 10 o’clock but ours still shows 9 o’clock.” I knew the clock was faulty, but I would say, “Do not worry, your clock is right.” They would believe me because they were gullible. They never tried to repair or change the clock. Mohinder was so studious that he would study even while eating food. He would mix lentil, vegetables, and curd to eat quickly but would always read a book alongside. I would flare up and say, “You should eat properly. You can carry books all the time.” But he was very hard-working, he used to read Napoleon’s book and say, someday I will also be somebody.

Father was the President of the Municipal Committee. The Committee had a library with two almirahs full of English books. No one would read them. Mohinder would borrow the keys of the almirah from the peon and read those books one after the other. His English improved immensely. He read Dickens’ novels and Abbott’s *The Life of Napoleon Bonaparte*. He loved the American writer Hawthorne’s ‘The Scarlet Letter’. It is probable that this experience ignited the desire to start libraries, in his mind.

Rajinder and Mohinder used to fight with each other but could not stay apart for a long time. Rajinder was stronger and Mohinder was weak, Rajinder was playful and Mohinder was fond of reading. When the boys used to play cricket, Mohinder would write in his diary, he would keep an eye on Rajinder’s clothes. He did not waste money, and he loved Father a lot. He would sleep a lot, especially on Sundays. At times, Father would say, “Wake up *posti ji!*”<sup>72</sup> He would store his things like his pens, pencils, holders, and the rest, very carefully. Rajinder would lose his own pens and take out pens from Mohinder’s drawer — Mohinder would get angry and say, “He does not take care of his own things, and also takes mine.” Mohinder would pluck ripe *ber* in the month of March, and dry them in the sun. He would keep the dried berries in his old socks, which we would steal and eat whenever we got a chance, much to his anger.

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Once, we struck a bet that no one would sleep during the daytime, we would tease whosoever would sleep.<sup>73</sup> Rajinder and Mohinder both went to sleep. I and Amar Kaur braided their hair, and applied rouge on their cheeks while they were deeply asleep. They awoke, only to see their made-up faces in the mirror, and we all had a good laugh. They washed their faces with soap, opened their braids. Some days later, I also went to sleep during daytime. They tied my feet together with a horse-chain, attached it to a rope, and began pulling me. I woke up. I caught hold of the rope and threatened them, “I’ll tell Father about this.” They tried to open the chain, but I stopped them because I wanted Father to know about it. They begged me to not involve him, and I relented.

We would play a lot. One day, our Bebe ji was sitting there. She used to loosen the string of her salwar while sitting. We put lemons in her salwar. She tightened the string when

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<sup>72</sup> *Posti*: one who is addicted to opium, used to tease his sleep addiction here.

<sup>73</sup> *Bhabi* in the original: implies that if boys sleep, we would tease them as girls. In other contexts, *bhabi* means sister-in-law.



she got up. Lemons began falling out of her salwar when she began walking. We started laughing. Bebe ji did not mind, and even if she did, she did not show her ire. We hid the keys every day. We returned the keys to her only when she would give us *patashae*.

A religious woman from the *Suniara* (Goldsmith) caste named Raj Kaur used to visit us. She taught us hymns. She used to say that she had seen the blue horse of Guru Gobind Singh ji, the horse had held up its left hoof. Her husband's name was 'Chirra'. He would ask us to place all our *khes* on him. Once, we kept his charpoy in the shade while he was sleeping on it, he awoke at 4 p.m. and asked, "Is it already morning?" We laughed and told him that it was evening time.

Father was deeply passionate about religion.<sup>74</sup> When Akalis took over the gurdwara of Muktsar from the Mahants, this charge was taken through Father.<sup>75</sup> The priests of Muktsar were Jatt Sikhs and were from well-off families. Sardar Sarmukh Singh of 'Khundian' was a friend of Father's. He also worked as the priest of Tambu Sahib. He asked for Father's advice about the conflict of the gurdwara. Father advised him to hand over the charge of the gurdwara to the SGPC himself. He happily gave the keys to the SGPC, but the priests of Durbar Sahib did not agree.<sup>76</sup> Akalis started an Akhand Path in the courtyard of the gurdwara. They locked the Durbar Sahib, but government officials made them open the locks so that they could not be locked again.

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Now, the government ordered the villagers to not provide Akalis with any groceries. It was Father's duty to ensure the execution of this order. Father would call Jathedars at midnight, he would inform them about his schedule for the next day and say "I am going to village 'x'", so that they should go to some other village and get their rations.<sup>77</sup> He would just tell the villagers to not give their rations to the Akalis, not enforce this, and move to the next village. He would pray every day, and say, "Oh Truthful God, please do not make me work against my religion. I am a government employee, so I also have to obey orders." He would always pray before leaving for official tours. He would read the scriptures every day whenever he was home — would awake early in the morning, recite *Jap ji Sahib* five times while taking his walk.<sup>78</sup> He was very fond of walks.

He would take his ration along during official tours; a servant always accompanied him to cook food for him. He never ate at anybody's house, even if he was on tour for fifteen days — he would eat food from his own pocket. He would keep the Guru Granth Sahib with him even during tours. He never drank alcohol in his life. He was a man of good character. The head teacher at Muktsar school was not of good character. Father was the President of the school. Once, he went to inspect the school. The Head Teacher was sleeping — the junior teacher and some girls were teaching the students. Father scolded the Head Teacher. After three

<sup>74</sup> *Panth*: Sikh religious order, in the original. Their father was passionate about the Sikh faith.

<sup>75</sup> See Sikh Gurdwara Reform Movement of the 1920s, for context of this conflict.

<sup>76</sup> Durbar Sahib: Here, the historical gurdwara of Muktsar.

<sup>77</sup> This way, he helped the Akalis, while the government order dictated otherwise.

<sup>78</sup> *Jap ji Sahib* is the first *bani* of the Guru Granth Sahib, composed by Guru Nanak, the first Sikh Guru.

days, she entered our house in the middle of the night, our peon Umar Deen let her in. Father was sleeping in the courtyard. He told us that she sat on his cot and he woke up. He asked her, “Why have you come here at this hour?” She got scared and got up. She began saying, “I want to plead for something.” He said, “Why do you have plead in the middle of the night? You could have written an application to convey whatever you wanted to say.” She said, “I got confused about my duties with respect to the previous Tehsildar and you.”<sup>79</sup> Father said, “Pack your bags, you will not stay in this place for long. I feel like suspending you, but I do not want to deprive you of your livelihood. Now, you better live decently. What will the girls you are teaching learn from you?” Embarrassed, she left. Then, Father called Umar Deen — he was scolded for opening the door at night without Father’s permission. Umar Deen said, “Sardarji, she used to visit the previous Tehsildar, so I got confused. I did not realise that you are different. Please forgive me, I’ll never make such a mistake again.”

Father was also a philanthropist. He loved his religion and would go to the gurdwara at every *Sangrand*.

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He would recite the *Baramah* prayer. People would be surprised — is he an officer or a Gursikh? He recites the prayers so peacefully, they would say. I also began following my religious routine very carefully. Let us share some stories of our father’s kindness and justice. He would be very sympathetic towards widows. He had instructed the peon to present the dispute cases of widows before others’ cases so that they could reach home on time. Some goons forcibly kidnapped a poor man’s daughter. Father brought her back after fifteen days of constant effort. The fair of *Maghi* is very popular in Muktsar. Father invited all our relatives to visit us and bathe in the *sarovar* during the festival, because he was posted at Muktsar. A tent was erected in the outer courtyard of our house. All our rooms were full of relatives. We went to bathe in the sarovar at 2 a.m. After that, the whole day was spent in cooking food for the guests. A cook was also engaged for this purpose, but despite that, there was so much work that I did not have time for myself. We cooked food for langar for three days. Two cans of ghee were consumed. During daytime, we would watch *Malwayis* from the balconies of the burj. They would wear bright turbans and long kurtas which touched the floor. They would also carry large daangs in their hands.

The *morcha* of Jaito started.<sup>80</sup> A *jatha* of twenty-five Singhs started going to Jaito from Muktsar every day. We strongly desired to feed langar to this jatha. We cooked salt and *besan paranthas* on the tandoor and reached Durbar Sahib at 4 a.m., carrying one basket of paranthas, a cauldron of butter and an earthen vessel full of lassi. We fed the jatha and the other Singhs in the gurdwara and returned home before the crack of dawn.<sup>81</sup> We would cover ourselves with khadi dupatta whenever we would visit the jatha, because Father had instructed us to not wear

<sup>79</sup> Duties here imply sexual favours — this means that she gave sexual favours to the previous Tehsildar and expected to offer the same to the new one.

<sup>80</sup> See [https://www.sikhiwiki.org/index.php/Jaito\\_Morcha](https://www.sikhiwiki.org/index.php/Jaito_Morcha) for basic reference.

<sup>81</sup> Here the word Singh is used to refer to Sikh men in general.

fine clothes while visiting the gurdwara. Even then, someone complained to the ‘Lat Sahib’ of Lahore that this Tehsildar is a *pooran* Sikh and he helps Akalis.<sup>82</sup>

Father went to Lahore, and then to Amritsar. The cleaning process of the sarovar was going on at Amritsar. He used to wear a white silk coat during the summers, and he entered the sarovar in the same clothes for helping with the cleaning.<sup>83</sup> He took off his clothes and kept them in a trunk later.

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When he returned, he said, “This is not dirt, this is saffron from the sarovar of Amritsar, do not wash it — keep it carefully. It will be a souvenir.” But we did not know then what those souvenirs meant.<sup>84</sup> He sent us all to Amritsar with Brother Harbans Singh and Bhai Sarmukh Singh’s wife. Bebe ji also accompanied us. We performed our *seva* very lovingly. I lied that I was fine even though I was sick, so that I could go there. I was enthusiastic about *seva*. One day, I fell unconscious and banged my head against a wall. A *sevadar* handed me a glass of *lassi* infused with *mishri* and rose essence.<sup>85</sup> I felt better after drinking it. I re-started *seva* after resting for a while. We had to return on the third day. Brother Harbans Singh asked me to perform ardaas for myself. I was troubled because of my sickness, so, standing in a corner of the path around the holy book, I prayed, “Hey Guru Ram Das ji, let me die if you choose. If you want me to live, then please make me healthy.” When I returned to Muktsar, I took the same medicine from the same doctor and it worked on me that time. I felt better. We lived in Muktsar for three years and nine months. Rajinder and Mohinder completed their matriculation from Khalsa High School. They were the first students to score so well ever since the school had been established; they made the school proud. Their teachers used to write letters to Father from Faridkot. Once, Father came home holding a postcard. He asked me to read it out loud. He knew how to read Punjabi, but Brother had written something strange. I read, “Your son, Mohinder Singh Randhawa, Governor of Punjab.” Father was elated to know that his son was so ambitious. He carefully kept that card with himself. When the boys returned from their trip to Faridkot, Father asked Mohinder to read out his letter. When Mohinder read it out aloud, we all laughed. Father told him, “Son, you are so ambitious.” He replied, “Father, only if I hope to become a Governor, will I become a D.C. or Commissioner.” But such are the ways of God — he achieved all these goals. His desires were fulfilled, but Father could not savour his son’s success. Neither were the children pampered by the parents, that is why they became serious by nature.

Father admitted both the brothers in Lahore Mission College. Just two months had passed when tragedy struck.

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<sup>82</sup> *Pooran*: Complete Sikh. *Lat Sahib*: a mispronunciation of *Lord Sahib*, or British official in-charge

<sup>83</sup> *Karseva* in the original.

<sup>84</sup> A tone of sorrow while recalling her father’s passing.

<sup>85</sup> *Sevadar*: one who performs *seva*.

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Our father died of a heart attack. He had been unwell for three days. Uncle Raghbir Singh, our brothers Harbhajan and Amrik Singh, and Grandfather came over. Father would fall unconscious. When he would regain consciousness, he would ask me to bring him a pen and ink, so that he could write something to secure our future. Whenever I would bring paper, pen and ink to him, Brother Amrik would keep it aside. This happened three or four times. I also kept quiet. I could not ask him why he was doing that; he should have let Father write. Now, everyone advised us to take Father to Lahore. I prepared food and packed it in tiffins. I also prepared utensils and groceries. Father began saying, change my cot and hand me fresh clothes and a turban. He changed his clothes, tied a violet under-turban and an off-white turban, removed the tied turbans, and kept them aside. He said, "I'll pack it while leaving." He asked me to comb his hair. I combed his hair and tied it in a topknot. Suddenly, he collapsed on the bed. I hurriedly called my uncle and brother from the burj. My uncle tried to administer medicine to him, but he could not consume it. Father had died. We laid him on the bed. When he was ill, he used to say, "Let's go, I'll go, but I've never travelled in a horse-cart before, so I'll ride the horse". He would keep saying this all night.<sup>86</sup> He would only cease talking when the drum was beaten at the crack of dawn. When we asked him, Father, why do you talk about these things, he would say, "I never realize what I am talking about." Brother Sarmukh Singh would sit next to him every night. A few hours before dying at 12 noon, Father had asked for the papers of pending legal cases he was supposed to hear and finalised his decision for one case. He said, "Call them here, I'll give them my decision." God's will cannot be undone. *Raaye Wadhe, Na Til Ghate, Jo Likhya Kartaar.*<sup>87</sup> He completed the journey of his life and left this world, but us five siblings became orphans. Then, we got his photo clicked, after which we bathed the body and prepared it, and carried the bier across the face of the Durbar Sahib.<sup>88</sup> All of us accompanied the procession. I was inconsolable during the *parikarma*.<sup>89</sup> I became unconscious. I kept weeping while unconscious. Then, we called all shopkeepers, and asked them for unpaid dues so that we could settle our accounts. But all of them were already settled. A cloth-seller asked us for money despite not being owed any, the treasurer showed him the receipt and condemned him.

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Some people are also honest. There was a *Lala* named Ishar Das. Some days ago, Father had handed him Rs. 9000 and all our jewellery. He came to us, returned everything and said, "There is an unlined copy of Sardar Singh, locate it and check it. It has all the accounts." We found the copy when we opened Father's trunk. It had accounts of the money and all the jewellery. Everybody thanked him.

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<sup>86</sup> Father's premonition of his forthcoming death.

<sup>87</sup> Line from Gurbani, means everything happens as per God's will.

<sup>88</sup> Since the dead cannot pay obeisance to God as per customs, the *arthi* is kept in front of the door of the gurdwara in symbolic obeisance.

<sup>89</sup> Walking path around the sarovar (water tank/pool) of the gurdwara.

Chapter 7  
**Return to Village Bodlan**  
 (1925)

(P. 62)

Brother Amrik Singh took us all along and set off for Bodlan. He took Father's ashes and placed them in a box. I kept this box on my thighs during our journey; we reached the village sometime later. We had left our beloved Father in Muktsar forever. We faced a lot of problems upon reaching the village. Those were difficult days, recalling those days makes one feel upset. Harbans Singh began practicing law in Dasuya. All of us lived together.

Now they got Rajinder Singh married. Poor Harpal Kaur was the daughter of Sardar Sher Singh Sandhu, a contractor from Farala. She was thirteen years old when she was married off. Harcharan Singh undertook all the arrangements for the marriage, and it was conducted with great pomp and show. Her father gifted her 150 gm of gold, but the poor girl did not receive any gift from our house, not even a ring or clothes, only the festivities of the mimics and dancers performing during the wedding had been arranged by us. Some time later, we also took Harpal Kaur to Bodlan. Some more time later, I was also married off and sent to my marital home in Doomvali. This village is near Dabvali.

Harpal Kaur, Harkishan Singh, sister Mohinder Kaur and Bebe lived together in Bodlan. Bebe ji would occasionally go to visit her brother Dr. Raghbir Singh.

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Elder brother Harbans Singh and his wife Amar Kaur used to trouble us a lot — we began receiving even chapattis without ghee from them. One day, she cooked a chickpea curry and did not add any ghee to it — we could not swallow it, and we ate our meal with difficulty. She got ghee brought for herself separately and kept it for their family. Rajinder and Mohinder returned during their long vacations. They bought us a buffalo. They made us set up a separate home, and we began living more comfortably after that. Whatever we would need would be brought by our brothers Bishna and Milkhi. They would leave firewood at our doorstep. My uncle was very hard-working. Every year during the month of monsoon, he would cut branches off trees for firewood, and collect heaps of thousands of them. The kind man would give half of the fruits of his labour to my father. My father loved his brother a lot, he would accept whatever the latter gave him with full gratitude; there was never any talk of exchanges of giving and taking between them. My brother Kartar Singh was my uncle's only son. Father loved his nephew a lot. Whenever he would come to visit us, he would get suits of his choice made and filled into a new trunk, apart from buying him new shoes. Buying shoes would become difficult because brother Kartar Singh's feet were a large size 11. That is why his shoes would be made after giving his special measurements. Kartar Singh was a tall, broad youth, he had a large appetite — he would eat ice-cream (*malai di barf*) whenever he would go to the market and finish the entire stock of the ice-cream seller. He would eat nine to ten eggs and three whole chickens. Brother Harbans Singh was a follower, and he did not use his own intellect. Amar Kaur would mistreat my sister-in-law Harpal Kaur — when I returned to the village, I saw that

the household was in a bad state. I also talked to Harpal Kaur. After I talked sense into her, they stopped fighting. I lived in our village for quite long — when our brothers' letter asking for something, they needed would reach us, I would go to our uncle. He would take recourse to his and Father's common fund from the people owing money to them and send the requisite amount to the boys. Our aunt was named Ram Kaur, she had a sweet temperament. She loved us and would begin sobbing upon seeing our difficulties.

When Rajinder and Mohinder would come home on holiday, Aunt would get a pitcher of milk, a large glass of curd and butter, stand in our veranda and call out to me, "Child come, daughter come, take this curd-butter for the boys. I cannot climb stairs." I would descend the stairs and take her gifts. I would sometimes go to her home to get these, but that was rare. I would feel very ashamed upon going to her house to take things from her, we had lived like kings when Father was alive.

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This is how we survived in the village. We had few grains; we would also buy vegetables in exchange for grains. In the morning, Jhandi Arain would call out, "Bibi ji, take your vegetable." She would carry a basket of vegetables on her head. In those days, vegetables used to be cheap, we would take vegetables according to our needs. We would get cattle feed from the city. Jaggery-brown sugar was extracted at home — we would get sugar and other essential items from the city of Dasuya.

Winter descended upon us. Rajinder's letter from Lahore asking us for quilts came to our doorstep. I de-seeded the cotton of our household and carded it, Harpal Kaur also helped. Now finding good cloth was the problem. I went to Aunt, and when Uncle returned home, she told him, "*Kako* came, said that she has to make quilts for Rajinder-Mohinder."<sup>90</sup> He said that if some trader owing us money would agree, they could provide the money from our joint fund for it. Some of our borrowers jointly owed money to my father and uncle. Uncle gave us money in 4-5 days. We got a wine-coloured coloured chintz cloth brought, it had big flowers in its pattern. We got the under-cloth dyed and sewed it under the chintz. This way we prepared the quilts. Our brothers came during the Dussehra holidays and took the quilts.

When the brothers would come home for the holidays, the house would come alive. We siblings would feel happy on getting together — Milkhi and others would come in the morning itself, and our brothers would leave with them. After wrestling for some time, they would bathe in the waters of the well and return home. They would eat something and go back to study in the area full of clumps of trees. When they would come for the summer holidays, Mohinder would take their luggage and go directly to the village, while Rajinder would come to fetch me from my marital home, I would also come home and all of us would live together. Poor Mindo would remain quiet, her studies were stopped after her schooling at Muktsar. She would keep working in the house the whole day. If our elder sister-in-law wished, she could have kept Mindo with her and helped her access schooling, but our brother was not walking on a path of

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<sup>90</sup> *Kako*: A term of endearment for female children, where '*kaka*' means baby-boy/child, and '*kako*' or '*kaki*' girl-child.

decency. Sister-in-law would always be engaged in the conflicts and chaos at home, that is why she could never take interest in Mindo's education.

Harkishan Singh used to study in Balagdi, but what did the poor boy study — even if he wanted a book, he would have to coax Harbans for days for it; getting money for the college fee from them would also come with taunts and objections. This is why he became depressed. He was good at studies. When he had to give his Class 10 examinations, I was also in the village at that time. I would wake him up at 3:00 a.m. in the morning for his studies and begin my prayers.

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He passed the exams with second division with his own hard work. But after the exams, nobody helped him pursue further studies. Father had left 10,000 Rupees for him. Amrik Singh's family claimed that they needed that money to pay for the loan for the Bikaner property, and got Rajinder to take out I do not know how much money. Amrik Singh had taken me to a *Chak* in Montgomery,<sup>91</sup> he was certain that if he would let me remain in Bodlan, I would not let him take Father's money. His suspicions were right. I kept explaining to Rajinder that they should not give him that money because it would prevent Harkishan from studying further, nobody would pay for his education. But they convinced Rajinder and got the money from him. They made me leave for my marital home directly from the Chak itself. I never felt at home in the Chak. Amrik Singh's house was full of conflicts. He had two wives, Balwant Kaur and Harnam Kaur. Balwant Kaur would always try to get Harnam Kaur thrashed by him. I get upset whenever I see a woman getting thrashed — I was not happy at their house, but what could I do? Brother did not want to send me away.<sup>92</sup> I left for my marital home in December without meeting my siblings.

Mohinder fetched me in the summer holidays. Mohinder liked to walk barefoot. I would say, "Do not walk barefoot." He would reply, "Who will let me walk barefoot after this? When I will become a Deputy Commissioner, carpets will be laid out for me to walk on wherever I would go." We were surprised at his comment, but he achieved what he said.

Mohinder's first marriage engagement was held in the house of Sardar Beant Singh in Uggi Chitti village. Mohinder asked them to send their daughter to school.<sup>93</sup> They refused this request, and so Mohinder refused the match and the engagement broke down. Mohinder was engaged to be married again after this. Sardar Gupal Singh, the Deputy Superintendent of Police in Lahore, sent us *shagun*. This included 31 gold coins, sweets, and many baskets of dry fruit. We kept one gold coin and returned the rest. Six months later, Brother [Mohinder] cancelled this engagement as well.

The summer holidays came again. Dr. Raghbir Singh was our maternal uncle. He wrote us a letter asking us to go to Patiala as soon as we read his letter, because Gajjan Singh, the contractor, was looking for a match for his daughter. We brother and sister set off for Patiala. When the discussion of marriage began, *Nani ji* told Gajjan Singh, "See brother, we can only

<sup>91</sup> *Chak*: area division in British India.

<sup>92</sup> Here 'Brother' or *bhaaiya*, refers to Amrik Singh, her step-brother.

<sup>93</sup> Daughter here refers to the girl he was engaged to be married to.

offer the boy as a groom, we do not have great property like yours.” Both of us siblings became infuriated. We got up and went outside.

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We decided that we would not secure this marriage by letting our reputation fall in their eyes. Uncle began saying, come sister, the car is standing downstairs, go see the girl. I said, “Uncle, we will discuss this at our home, and then see the girl.” We returned to Patiala. Many people would come to us with offers of matchmaking and marriage, but we would tell everyone that the boy did not want to get married as of that moment. The Jatts of the village were more worried about Mohinder’s marriage than Mohinder himself. When Mohinder would go to Bheekhe Khan’s area with books in his hand to study, then Charan Singh Masand would ask, “Sardar ji, will you keep studying now and not get married?”

On 11 June 1932, Mohinder passed the I.C.S. exams. We were very happy; of course, we would be; but the people of our villages and surrounding areas also celebrated his achievement with great joy. Nowadays, everybody easily becomes a D.C., in those days, becoming a D.C. was a big achievement. The village people had received Mohinder at the Garna Sahib railway station; they celebrated his achievement by playing trumpets and welcomed him by garlanding his neck. Harpal had given birth to a son, which Rajinder named Beerinder. When Rajinder came home during long holidays, he brought a warm cap and sweater as gifts. Harpal Kaur’s father had died, where would the poor girl go now, she lived in our village itself. She would undertake trade and business at her home and live well. Bebe ji lived near our house in the village and would keep interacting with the family. It is true that only a woman’s heart understands her pain when she gets widowed at thirty and no centre of authority remains. Kishan Singh was Bebe ji’s father. He decided that he would get his daughter home, file a court case, and claim all the property. He came quietly and took Bebe away. He decided to hire a lawyer without seeking uncle’s advice. The lawyer told uncle that his father was going to file a court case. Uncle was terribly upset, he said, “Kako, I do not want to live with you as family alone, I want to live with all other six people as family. I consider them my nieces and nephews. Do not file a case against them, they will give you everything without the case. They will always respect you.” He explained this to her and forbade her from going to lawyers. He was also upset with his father. As per everyone’s consensus, he gave all the jewellery, 5000 Rupees which we had in the bank, a copy of that, and 25 acres (1 *murabba*) of our property in Bikaner, to Bebe ji, as per his decision.

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Uncle Raghbir Singh was a wise doctor — he maintained his relationships with his relatives and also took everything.

We are grateful to God that our Bebe was a woman of high morals. After Father’s passing, she never wore a colourful dupatta, did not even wear a ring on her hand. Even when she would take the clothes washed by the dhobi, she would say, please dirty and crush this cloth a little bit. She was a very patient woman, she never complained that she did not have a son. Every year, on the day of Father’s death anniversary, she gets prayers of Guru Granth



Sahib arranged and donates clothes in charity in his name. Father's ashes were kept for a long time in the prayer room in a small almirah, nobody bothered to remove them urgently. Finally, Bebe ji took the box, and went to Patalpuri with her father to scatter her husband's ashes.

Mohinder Singh decided to get married and then go abroad. We also agreed with this decision, believing that this was better than him getting a foreign wife home. After a lot of discussion, we found the match of Dr. Harbhajan Singh's daughter very well-suited for us. We knew Doctor sahib and his family very well; they were genuinely nice people. After ruminating over it, we accepted this match from the hands of brother Niranjana Singh. The date of the marriage was set for 15 August 1932. In those days, Mohinder went to Amritsar, and lived at Balbir Singh Randhawa's place. Randhawa's wife gave birth to a son while he was there. When he returned home, I gave birth to a daughter. He said that if he had known of the auspicious occasion, he would not have gone to their home and would have remained in Bodlan so that his sister would also have borne a son.

The marriage ceremony began. We sang a lot of songs. All the women of the village gathered and sang *ghodiyan* (marriage songs):

“Slowly, slowly,  
Tie a turban around my son's head,  
Tie the cloth, decorate the turban with a beautiful kalgi,  
Who has captured my son's attention?  
Who has captured the Queen's son?  
Who has captured him?”

We sang ritual songs like these. The day of rubbing *vatna* stone on the groom arrived, this occasion is called '*Maayiaan*' in Doaba. The sisters-in-law started rubbing the *vatna*. They stood wearing *phulkari*. My brother excitedly sat on the platform.

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The sisters-in-law would apply *vatna* and sing,

“*Wahva ki vatna katore da,  
Wahva malendiyaan do janiyaan.*”<sup>94</sup>

Sister-in-law applied it to Brother's mouth. She splattered his beard with the ointment. Brother got up, pushed Sister-in-law Rao onto the ground and applied the *vatna* on her face and hair. Everybody started laughing. Sister-in-law was very young, but men are men. The ritual got completed. Brother went to get married. The *baraat* went to Narangwal in a lorry. The people in the procession were the farmers of the village, Milkhi and *taaya* Bheekhe Khan had also come. They arrived on the third day of the wedding. Iqbal looked very beautiful; she was young — only 15 years old. She had a pretty face, fair skin, a gold necklace on her neck, bangles on her wrists, and rings on the fingers of both hands. Harpal Kaur was also happy. The bride was

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<sup>94</sup> “*The vatna is in the bowl, Two women rub it well*”

accompanied by a barber.<sup>95</sup> We offered her milk; she drank a little bit of it. After a lot of time passed, the barber began to say, “Please give tea to the girl.” I made tea and offered it to Iqbal. The custom of drinking tea was developed in our house with the coming of Iqbal.

Mohinder Singh wished to talk to Iqbal. Around 7, I took Iqbal along with me to the roof. The barber who had come with her was insecure about being left alone in the wedding household. But we did not let her know of this meeting. My brother also made me sit next to them, but I made some excuse and brought Iqbal with me. There was so much patience in people in those times, and especially in Mohinder Singh, he had so much self-control.

My brother has a lot of self-confidence. He considers himself fortunate and is, indeed, fortunate. The man whose wife is obedient is truly fortunate. Wise people say that the household that has an obedient wife is heavenly. Every happiness of Mohinder is Iqbal’s happiness too, she agrees with whatever he says. The husband’s wishes are the wife’s wishes. It is true that:

“In order to find God, one has to destroy the self,  
How clever can we be in front of him?”<sup>96</sup>

As per this statement from the Guru Granth Sahib, Iqbal has developed herself as per all the wishes of her husband. Every house can be heavenly if women like her live in every house.

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Mohinder is happy with his wife in every scenario, and why should he not be, she fulfils his wishes in every way.

Now my brother had to go abroad. We sat and thought about what we should now do about Mohinder Kaur. Mohinder Singh said, “My friend Sham Singh lives in village Aazamwala, Tehsil Fazilka. He used to study with us. He has a job in Delhi, we can get our sister married to him. I will get her married and then go abroad.” We got her engaged to Sham Singh, and then they got married. But we then came to know that his family had the mentality of uneducated farmers, we had only met the boy before the marriage was conducted. No elder brother took responsibility for the decision. This was a mistake — if we had not gotten her married, Harkishan Singh, Bebe ji, Harpal Kaur, everyone would have still been able to live together, we could have married her after Mohinder returned from abroad. But we go where fate takes us. Sham Singh ji was kind and had a warm temperament. But my sister was not happy in that household. There are many reasons for her unhappiness — one reason is that after her marriage, no elder brother ever went to meet her, and none of them helped her in any situation. The poor girl quietly counted her days. Mohinder Singh went abroad. Harkrishan Singh and Harpal Kaur went to Chak no. F.F.B. Gajsinghpur, Bikaner, along with Bebe. Harkishan Singh began farming and everyone started living in Bikaner. Mohinder Kaur went to Delhi from Bikaner itself. Barjinder was born in Bikaner. I had now gone to Pathrala and continued living there. Letters from Rajinder and Mohinder would come to us from abroad.

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<sup>95</sup> *Nain*: female-barber, the barbers were matchmakers and so they would be especially invited to weddings.

<sup>96</sup> Verses from Gurbani, loosely translated.

These letters were the happiness of my life, I would wait for their courses to finish so that they would return. Rajinder took a lot of time with his course.

Chapter 8  
**The Hustle and Bustle of the Village**

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The villages of Hoshiarpur are so beautiful!

This is the only site in the whole of India where one can see the snow-covered peaks of the Himalayas from the ground so clearly. The tall blue hills of the Shivalik have embellished the aesthetic beauty of the fertile land of Seerowal even more. Mango orchards and clumps of trees in all directions. Bodlan is the most famous village out of Seerowal's villages. The Garna Sahib gurdwara is a historic gurdwara in the vicinity of these orchards, this has great hustle and bustle every month.

The changing scenes of this village, evident every month and at the beginning of every season, impart joy to the heart. When thundering dark clouds would emerge in the monsoon season and descend as loud sheets of rain, the thunder would make the peacocks call out *keon-keon*. The croaking of frogs would fill the air at night. When the frogs would cease, the *binde* would begin the song of their *tee-tee*. At night, the dance of the fireflies on the pond would begin under the peepal tree and it would feel like stars raining down on earth.

During day, cows and buffaloes would graze on uncropped land, and white cranes would pick at insects behind them. The calves would raise their tails in joy and run around. The monsoon season does not only give joy to people, animals and birds also participate in this joy and welcome the clouds.

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Herds of white cranes streaking through the black sky looked lovely, they would appear like garlands of white flowers lying around God's neck.

Mango orchards are full of life and sound during the monsoon season. The *kuhoo-kuhoo* of koels during day and *pi-kahaan, pi-kahaan* of the *papihas* at night, fill the air. We would leave for the orchards in the morning, fill water in the basin, wash the mangoes fallen under the trees after ripening, and eat them.

Once we would eat the mangoes of 15-12 trees, we would come to know of the tree which produced the most delicious mangoes. Then we would get a basketful of mangoes from that tree brought, wash them clean in cold water and fill our bucket. The cool water of these Hoshiarpuri villages is also a blessing. It is so cool even in the summers that if you bathe in it, it can make you shiver. We would cool the mangoes this way and eat them to our fill. Some sour-sweet, some sour, some light green. The Paradise of Islam is explained as having streams of beautiful women and waterfalls. Us Hoshiarpurias' Elysium has sweet mangoes. What can compete with the delight they give? We cannot say if Muslims' Elysium will have beautiful women or not, but our Elysium is with us, and we can savour it in the months of *Saavan-Bhadon* in every third year. Many people ravaged by work and stress and tired of cities ask me,

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<sup>97</sup> This chapter marks the beginning of Mohinder Singh Randhawa's writing; the earlier chapters provided insight into his childhood through his sister's words.

what is the cure for our disease, how do we satiate our soul? I always give them this advice, “Go eat mangoes in the orchards of Hoshiarpur for fifteen days and forget that you are educated.”

Once the mango season ended, ears of corn began ripening. We would strike fire on cow-dung cakes and roast the corn on it. We would savour this roasted corn and return home to sour buttermilk flavoured with salt and black pepper. Once the corn ripened, we would roast puffed rice (*murmura*) on a furnace owned by a *Jhioori*, they would make popcorns from the corn. In winter, we would feel the air becoming fragrant with the sweetness of hot jaggery and sugarcane juice in the *velna*. The fragrance of hot jaggery and sugarcane juice is so delicious. I still salivate when thinking about it. At night, we would wrap ourselves in blankets, stand near the furnace and listen to the stories of the farmers. Nobody can compete with the people of Bodlan in telling stories and chatting. Half of the village people have nothing else to do, they sit on cemented platforms and stumps of tress to chat.

When it was colder, we would seek warmth from the kindling in the veranda of a large hall, the farmers would take the husk of jute and use it as fuel to the kindling. We would listen to Gopi Chand, Bikramajit, Raja Bhoj and Pooran Bhagat’s stories with great interest. I would also try to explain scientific concepts to the farmers sometimes and say that the earth is round and that it revolves around the sun. One Raja Singh was a trader of buffaloes.

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He was quite rich but used to live in a very dirty and dingy house. I would ask him, “Uncle, why do you live in hell? Will you take your money with you when you die? Build a well-ventilated bungalow for yourself.” He would reply, “I’ll build it when the earth stops revolving and rotating, so that the face of the house does not turn the opposite way.”

It would get even colder in the month of *Poh*. A cold wind would blow from the mountains, dew would become frost at night, and a layer of ice would form on the ponds. The sun would look like the moon during daytime. The buffaloes would run to the pond to drink water; they would put their mouths into the water, but quickly withdraw from it because it would be so cold. Farmers would be enveloped in khes, their arms scissored into a cross; they would keep shivering but not keep away from work and chores. I felt very cold. When I would cover myself in a warm muffler (*guluband*) and leave my house in the morning for my ablutions in the fields, Charan Singh Masand would say, “Sardar ji, where are you going looking like a *pooni*?” I would greatly enjoy soaking in the sun on the rooftop in *Poh*, and eating *saag* and *makki di roti* would taste even more wonderful.

The *Phagun* and *Chet* months witnessed beautiful spring. Decorated by yellow mustard flowers, the fields of wheat looked like a green photograph framed in a yellow frame. The red, yellow, and blue dupattas of the ones picking mustard would look so beautiful in the midst of the green crops. Boys would press the crisp chickpea peels to make bursting sounds, and blow into oat shoots as if they were pipes. Walking barefoot on the cool sand would feel even more delightful. This month is a month of leisure for farmers and landowners. Wrestling matches would be organised during the fairs of Baisakhi and boys would fill themselves up with laddoos and jalebis.

When the harvest of the wheat was complete, the farmers would get busy winnowing the grains. They would quickly toss the wheat husks into the air in the sun to separate the grain. When the grains would come home in the months of *Jeth-Harh*, then the tour of invitations would begin. As per these invitations, the people of the village would invite each other to feasts — maanh di dal, sour buttermilk coloured red with chilly, *pakodi-raita* and large chapattis cooked on huge girdles. I am talking about 1925, when the disease of elections had not entered the villages yet, and people would not dream of memberships and ministries; everyone would live with great love and share in each other's joys and sorrows.

Many people do not like summers, but I really like the summer months. The delight of bathing in cool water during the day and pleasure of sleeping on the rooftop at night is incomparable.

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A direct relationship develops between man and nature upon sleeping under the sky. I remember gazing at the moon and stars while lying down on cots and being unable to keep our eyes off the night sky. The routine journey of the moon in the sky is so wonderful. We could see the moon's dim light from the back of the mountain peaks; it would slowly increase in brightness and spread in the whole sky. The hide and seek of the moon and clouds would give us even more pleasure. We could see the polestar (*Dhru Tara*) and Ursa Major (*Saptarishi*) constellation in the northern sky with great clarity and recall the story of Saint Dhruv. The Milky Way would gleam even more in the dark night sky, and we would think that as there are millions of suns and galaxies moving in the dim belt of space, maybe life is much more advanced in them? A group of stars is called a *tangli*. We would look at this to estimate time and get ready to sleep. The barking of dogs would make the silence of the night even more intense in contrast. There is so much peace in the quiet of the night, it gives us strength and life. Sometimes, I would wake at the crack of dawn and see the morning star. Its lustre is so kind. It feels like it is an earthen lamp in the sky. At this time, the entire village would be asleep, and I would believe that I was the sole possessor of this natural beauty and only I knew its secrets. Immersing myself in its beauty and forgetting the self, I would be intoxicated by it.

Mango orchards do not only satisfy the physical needs of the residents of Hoshiarpur, they also give spiritual satisfaction to villagers. Every orchard would play host to a sadhu, and people would go there to listen to gurbani in their free time. Once when I was home from college during my summer break, I went to village Kotla Naudh Singh near Haryana township. I passed a sadhu's hut in a mango orchard on my way. I was proud of my scientific knowledge and I thought I knew everything. The saint was praying in the hut and I heard: *Ae Man Chanchala Chaturai Kinne Na Paaya*.<sup>98</sup> My arrogance broke down upon hearing this and I began ruminating. Saint Narayan Singh and Saint Harnam Singh had created a flurry of activity in the orchard of our village. We would also participate in the audience of this hymn-singing during our summer holidays. Saint Narayan Singh was a kind man.

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<sup>98</sup> "Oh clever mind, you may be as sly as you can, but cunning will not get you closer to God". This line from *gurbani* has been kept untranslated for its variability in interpretation in English. A rough meaning has been provided here.

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He had a thick white beard, a glow on his face, and he talked very sweetly. Whenever he would talk, he would give peace and joy to the listener. Saint Harnam Singh would explain *Yog Vashisht* and *Suraj Prakash* very well and we would listen carefully.<sup>99</sup>

The orchards would be kept clean and there would never be a shortage of people volunteering to sweep them. It is said that the scorching heat of July-August transforms the farmer into a saint. The saints were served by a farmer named Gangu. Tired of ploughing the soil, he came to the orchard. I asked him, "Gangu, do you ever pray?" He said, "They never let me meditate; they keep asking me to fill their water or sweep the place."

Among the audience, a Rajput from village Berchha named Chaudhary Bheekhe Khan was a devotee of the saints and of gurbani. A line of cots would be kept under the mango trees and Chaudhary Sahib would sit on the biggest cot. They would drink *sukkha* and discuss gurbani. Chaudhary Sahib had a large heart. He had mortgaged half of his land with my uncle Sardar Mehar Singh. Mehar Singh was a miser and he would rarely give offerings to the saints. Why should he not have been miserly? In his case, he had garnered his wealth with great hard work. When it would rain, he would plant trees, and if he had no other work in the monsoons, he would clean the jute or chop fodder for the animals with his scythe. Saint Harnam Singh would always say, "Do not get caught in the trap of wealth. Whatever you earn should be spent on serving saints." They would recite this prayer from Kabir's *bani* keeping in mind Mehar Singh's miserliness:

*"Soome Dhan Raakhan Ko Diya  
Mugadh Kahe Dhan Mera.  
Jam Ka Dand Moond Mein Laage  
Khin Mein Kare Nabera."*<sup>100</sup>

When they would speak the last two lines, then Chaudhary Bheekhe Khan would recite along with them and everybody would laugh.

The saints would bathe at dawn at the well, and I would take water from it with a bucket. It would be cold, the water would steam, and the saints would wash their underwear and say, "*Ram Das Sarovar Nhaate, Sab Utre Paap Kamaate.*"<sup>101</sup> Serving the saints by drawing out their water would make me feel happy. These customs give birth to humility and service, which are vanishing values today.

Sex has great influence on man's life. The person whose sex glands are strong is very commanding; when he channelises his sexual urges into other activities, they get expressed in science, literature, and art.

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<sup>99</sup> *Yog Vashisht* and *Suraj Prakash* are two books.

<sup>100</sup> Credited to Kabir, these couplets mean: God has given you wealth only for safekeeping, but you say "It is mine"; When Yamraj's stick will beat your head, you will die in a second. Yamraj is the God of Death.

<sup>101</sup> Guru Ram Das says that when you bathe in the lake of *gurbani*, all your sins wash away.

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No impotent person can be a great man, and people who have left their mark on different fields were all men.

When I look back at my life, I recall that when I was 12 years old, I was travelling to Lahore via train. The train had men, women, girls, and boys. A 12-year-old girl entered our coach from Amritsar Station. She was fair, and had sharp features and almond-shaped eyes. I kept staring at her beautiful face until Lahore. For many years, her face would instinctively come before my eyes when I would be alone.

I still recall an incident from the fair of Bhabhor in those times. A young man swam through the river, ran, and hugged a Pahari woman. People threw a cloth sheet over the couple. Some minutes later, he threw the sheet away and ran to the river. He was uncontrollable. He jumped into the river. He crossed the river as the people looked on.

I particularly hate ugly women, no matter how full of qualities or wise they are. I believe that beauty and intellect are both required in a woman, the woman who has a combination of both these traits is a true goddess, she gives power to a man and awakens his potential.

Young girls are the jewels of the village. Bodlan also had no shortage of beautiful girls. Jasso, the daughter of Bela Singh Khunkhun, was the most beautiful amongst them. Fair skin, thin lips, sharp nose, and light brown eyes. When she would carry her bronze utensil and take lunch for workers in the fields, an electric feeling would pass through my body. I would often cross Jasso when I would take my books to the fields to study. She would look at me from under her eyelashes, and I would look back at her. But we never talked to each other.

The morality of people in the village is higher than that of the cities. If a boy would keep an ivory comb in his topknot and pass through a street three times, the elderly people would scold him, "Why, what is it? Why do you keep coming here?"

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Girls and boys would meet each other during the full moon and new moon events in gurdwaras. Garna Sahib would have a religious gathering where the girls and women would sit on one side, and men and boys would sit on the other side. The elderly might have been immersed in the prayer, but the girls and boys would come only to see each other. Whoever one would like, one would keep staring at continuously.

The other place for meeting would be the Jhioori's furnace. Boys and girls would keep corn in jute bowls and sit around the furnace. The Jhioori would be busy roasting the corn, while the girls and boys would be busy staring at each other.

When somebody would have a wedding, the entire village would help out. They would collect cots from every house and whoever had a lactating buffalo or cow would give all their milk to the house of the wedding. All the elderly would gather to welcome the bridegroom's family and the youth would serve food to the people.

Entertainers and mimics would also be called to the wedding celebrations. The mimics would try hard to mimic different people and things in the clumps of branches. Many times, people would not give them any money for a long time, and they would start talking to each other by saying, "Brother! This looks like a village of fun-loving people, but seems like its



people are cold. It appears like everyone has drunk coriander.”<sup>102</sup> Hearing this, the people would go crazy with laughter and the mimics would begin their conversation again:

“There is a thing which even God does not have.”

“What?”

“God does not have anger!”

“There is a thing that is not there in the sky.”

“What is that?”

“Trees!”

“There is a thing that is not there on earth.”

“What is that?”

“Stars.”

“There is something which even these Chaudharys do not have.”

“What is that?”

“No, they do not have a no.”

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And the landholding Chaudharys who had come for the wedding would shyly listen, and shower money on the mimics once they heard this.

This way people would celebrate their joys and dance together.

*Rasa* dramas would be organised at night. The *Ramdharis* would ordinarily perform the *Krishna-Leela*, and 12-year-old boys would rub flour on their faces and act like *Gopis*. The farmers would greatly enjoy the performance of the ‘Gopis’ and shower them with 2-anna coins.

Sometimes, groups of musicians would also come to the village. The most famous amongst these was the one led by Nabia, Kaalu and Saulay Bharai, who used to play the *dhad* and *sarangi*. The group in front would have three dancing boys wearing long skirts and dancing like peacocks. The drummer would come after them and beat his drum to a rhythm while the *sarangi* player would play the sarangi with a great flourish. Intoxicated with opium, the *khartal* player would start singing:

“Oh, celibate Goddess,  
Please give me a blessing.  
You live in the mountains,  
Please help me perform my work successfully.”

After the initial prayer, the leader of the group would start singing loudly and the dancing boys would run onto the ground as passionately as a rooster running towards a hen. Sometimes the Jhioor of the mountains would perform all-night prayer meetings (*jagrata*), and they would

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<sup>102</sup> Coriander has a cooling nature, hence the word-play.

sing the legend of Pooran Bhagat.<sup>103</sup> This way, the people of the village would have fun and live with joy.

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<sup>103</sup> The *Jhioor* are thus cooks and singers, they perform different caste roles.

**Part II: Student**

Chapter 9  
**Mission College Lahore**  
 (1924-1926)

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We brothers passed our matriculation in 1924. Both of us passed in first division.<sup>104</sup> I had 520 marks and Rajinder had 519. We now had to decide which college of Lahore we wanted to study in. Father had already had a look at the colleges of Lahore. Government College was the best college, and Foreman Christian College and Mission College were next in rank. Father began to say that we should not take admission in Government College because the sons of rich people studied there, they even wiped their noses with silk handkerchiefs.

So, both of us took admission in Mission College. This College had been established by American missionaries, and Dr. E.D. Lucas was its Principal while Dr. G.H. Rice was the Vice Principal. I chose the medical stream. English, Physics, Chemistry and Biology were my subjects. I was weak in Mathematics, and I had chosen Biology to avoid taking Mathematics.

Our accommodation was arranged for in Newton Hall. This hostel had two floors and every room had four boys. This fact made life difficult. When one would want to study, the other would wish to sleep and say, switch off the light. The washrooms were on the ground floor and so the boys would urinate from the windows at night.<sup>105</sup>

Father died 3-4 months after we took admission in College.

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Our elder brothers wanted us to take up jobs. They went to Jalandhar and got both of our names written in the list of applicants for the Naib Tehsildar position in the commissioner.<sup>106</sup>

After coming to college, I took my tutor Professor Samuels Lal's advice. He said that both of us were good at studies and so we should drop the idea of working as Naib Tehsildars as of then. We really liked this advice; it changed our lives.

I did not like the city of Lahore. When we would reach the railway station of Lahore with cans of ghee from home in our hands, we would feel sad. Coolies in red shirts would excitedly push each other to carry people's luggage. The architecture of that station was like a fort. Perhaps some engineer had thought that only that type of architecture suited the warring frontier province.

We would reach our hostel in a tonga and return to our studies the very next day. Us villagers would find all the American professors looking the same, and we could not differentiate one from the other for some months. Dr. Lucas taught us the Bible, and I really liked the 'Sermon on the Mount'. I had experienced studying in Sikh, Arya Samaj and Christian schools and colleges by then. This is how I became familiar with the principles of all religions.

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<sup>104</sup> First division corresponds to equal to or more than 60% marks. It was very difficult to achieve in the English educational system in British India.

<sup>105</sup> Because nobody would want to go downstairs at night.

<sup>106</sup> 'Commissionary' is as it appears in English in the text. Meaning, the Deputy Commissioner's office.

I realized that all religions look for God and they have kept different names for Him. This is the central tenet of religions, but every religion has established armies of bhai, pandit, mullah and padre and they have developed ritualism. In the end, many people forget religion and find mental satisfaction in ritual alone.

Biology also opened my eyes. Studying this taught me how life had evolved and progressed. This evolution happened in the case of both plants and animals. When one goes to the origin of life, then both animals and plants can be found originating from the same source. The green colour in plants, called chlorophyll, gives them strength. With the energy of the rays of the sun, and water and carbon dioxide combining, this process can produce carbohydrates. This strength is not present in animals and so they depend on plants. Slowly, in some 200 crore years, life kept evolving and man came into existence. First, life emerged in the seas and oceans, and insects, worms, and fish developed there.

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Then frogs evolved and life came to land. Then after evolving from species like lizards, it developed into mammals and birds. Mole rats, Tarsius Monkeys and then monkeys which could walk, and gradually in two crore years, it evolved into the species of man.

This knowledge opened the windows of my mind, and I stopped believing in the superstitions and miracles of religion. I realised that real religion is not show, it is the state of the heart. Prayer is not needed, because real prayer instinctively emerges from the heart just like a child's laughter and tears. Simultaneously, it is also true that a large power which we cannot see, lives in the whole universe. When we speak the truth and do good deeds, this power helps us.

We would visit different locales of Lahore during our Dussehra holidays. Anarkali Market was interesting. I would feel suffocated in Dabbi Market and the Old City. I would ask myself how people lived in such narrow lanes. I would pity the yellow, weak bodies and sallow, thin faces of the shopkeepers and their wives selling their wares in those lanes. One could not see the bloom of health on anyone's face.

I would see the bungalows of Civil Lines and think that those who lived in those bungalows were so fortunate. One could see flashes of the beauty of the middle class from these bungalows. The women and daughters of the Sheikhs and Khattris of Lahore were famous for their beauty. Bernier also appreciated their beauty. He had developed the following scheme to see these women — he would climb an elephant which would have a large bell around its neck. The beauties would come to the windows of their bungalows upon hearing the bells.

I had four friends in Mission College. Amar Chand Joshi, Parvez Muhammad Ismail, Dharam Pal Bhandari and Niaz Muhammad Khan. From amongst them, Joshi became the Vice Chancellor of Panjab University, and the other three became I.C.S. officers. Niaz Muhammad was an addict, and he often smoked the *hooka*. He was intelligent and hard-working. He gave me H.G. Wells' *Outlines of History* to read. This book greatly influenced my perspective. Parvez was the son of Professor Ismail. He occasionally invited us to meals at his bungalow in Mozang. Dharam Pal once shared my meal in the hostel.

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After this, whenever he would meet me, he would say, ‘Friend Mohinder, I remember your meal. I will surely treat you to a meal in exchange.’ I quietly laughed, thinking that I did not even remember this fact, but these city-people have such small hearts. Dharam Pal also did not know the names of ordinary trees like peepal, beri, neem.

Sometimes while climbing the stairs of Newton Hall, we would overhear the conversation of Hindu boys about Sikhs and Jatts. They would say, these people are very stupid, and they rarely have intelligent fellows amongst them. They would say similar unflattering things about Muslims. This leads one to think that the foundation of Pakistan was not established by Jinnah, the seeds of this division had been planted in 1925 itself.

I still remember four or five names from among my teachers. Jagannath Swami was my favourite teacher. He would teach Zoology in an interesting way and sometimes also sing *Heer* for us.<sup>107</sup> V.P. Puri would teach us Physics, and Mehar Chand Sethi, Botany. Sethi taught Botany in a very boring way, and many boys left the subject. Sinclair taught English very well. I was very proficient in English, and whenever I would write essays, they were so good that they would be read out to the whole class.

In the second year, we decided to take a separate room in a private hostel so that we could study uninterrupted. After searching for such a room for quite some time, we finally took a room in Agnihotri Hostel. This was a bad building, but there was no other option. At night, sesame-sweet sellers would light acetylene gas lamps. Their loud invitations and crackling sweets would disturb the peace even more at night.<sup>108</sup>

Many thugs also used to live in the hostels of Lahore. One thug named Munsha became our enemy and threatened us by saying that he would not let us give our exams. We reported against him to Sardar Sant Singh in the Deputy Superintendent’s office and he gave Munsha a warning.

We would go to private orange orchards to study during our holidays. I studied like this: first I would carefully listen to my professors’ lectures and take notes, then I would return home, read the books, and underline the important lines with red pencil. Then, I would take notes from the books, and make notes on every subject. I carefully maintained those notebooks and kept reading them over and over. I would act like a professor delivering a lecture to the boys on some subject.

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I would close the notebook and speak whatever I had read out loud. Then I would read the notebook and see that I had forgotten some points. I would re-read them with more focus, and never forget them again.

After giving my exams in March, I went to Chak 51/12, Tehsil Chichawatni, where my brother Amrik Singh lived. There, they were suffering from a plague epidemic and we would live in kutchra huts. There were a lot of snakes there, we killed many of them. The summer heat of July-August made living in the huts difficult. Hot wind (*loo*) would blow, and sometimes

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<sup>107</sup> *Heer*, Waris Shah’s rendition of the love ballad of two lovers separated in tragedy.

<sup>108</sup> Sweets that make crackling sounds when roasted. Adjective used by Randhawa.

black dust-storms struck, small stones would also fly with the wind. In *Harh*, I caught typhoid fever. Between the fever and the blowing loo, it felt like someone was constricting my breathing. Despite being feverish, I took a train and reached my village Bodlan. I decided I would go to the hospital in Dasuya on my horse to get my medicines.

We got our results in June. I stood first in my college and was third in the whole of Punjab. Typhoid had greatly weakened me. The exam results revitalised my shrivelled soul and encouraged me.

Chapter 10  
**Government College Lahore**  
 (1926-1930)

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After passing the exams of intermediate science, I decided to specialise in Botany. This was why I took admission in Government College Lahore. The Botany and Zoology departments of that College had a good reputation in the world of science. Professor Shiv Ram Kashyap had done great work on liverworts, and had also discovered many new plants. S.L. Ghosh was an expert in algae, and Dr. Chaudhary was doing extraordinary work in Physiology.

Most of the students in our class had first division, and there was intense competition amongst us. This was why we were not interested in anything other than studying. Night would fall as we kept working in the laboratories. We also could not participate in any sport; I probably went to the cinema about four or five times in two years. In order to remain healthy and fit, we would do sit-ups in the morning, and exercise with a chest-expander in the evening.

Our College had a successful Biological Society; I was chosen as its Secretary. When the elections happened in the second year, I saw that many boys who had promised to vote for me, deceived me during the voting, and a terrible candidate got more votes than I did.

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After this experience, I began to hate elections.

Professor Kashyap had a special love for the Himalayas, and he would take a group of boys to the Himalayas during every summer vacation. He had also been to Tibet and Kailash-Mansarovar. Our class accompanied him to Mussoorie in 1927, and to Chamba and Pangri in 1928. When we reached Chamba, Professor Kashyap called all the boys and explained that many sorceresses lived there. "Be careful", he said. By 'sorceress', he meant the *Gaddans* who were famous for their beauty.<sup>109</sup> We stayed in a dirty dharamshala in Chamba. Every boy had brought some eatables from home, and I had moongi pinni. I went to walk in the market, and when I returned, I saw that the pinnis had vanished. In the evening, I saw that all the thieves kept going to the loo. The moongi flour was somewhat uncooked and they also had a lot of it, and so all of them got dysentery.

Professor Kashyap familiarised us with the flora of the mountains through these journeys. There was no herb whose name we did not know. Amar Chand Joshi was the best at identifying the plants. When nobody could identify a plant, he would find its true name. This knowledge increased our love for the Himalayas in our hearts. And, as a result, I savoured all the subsequent journeys I made into the Himalayas.

Having experienced the dusty rooms of Newton Hall in Mission College and Agnihotri Hostel, New Hostel felt like heaven. Clean rooms, and sanitary fittings in the washrooms. Both of us brothers lived in a two-metre room.

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<sup>109</sup> *Gaddan* (female), *Gaddi* (male), members of a pastoralist hill tribe in the Himalayan range.



We would go for a walk on the Mall Road in the evening, and then I would overhear the boys of D.A.V. College say, “Come, let us go quickly, or the New Hostel will shut down.”

Apart from us, New Hostel had many other twin brothers. Two Bhabha brothers, and a boy living near them belonged to the ‘gadi’ sub-caste. Radhe Shyam was the son of a Baniya Seth from Saharanpur, he was very particular about untouchability. The Muslim boys would come and drink water from his earthen pot, and shout slogans of ‘Radhe Shyam, Radhe Shyam’.

Boarding hostels had a lot of groupism. The leader of our group was Kanwar Ranjit Singh.

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He was a Rajput from Bilaspur, and he was the uncle of the Raja of Bilaspur. He was handsome and well-built and was the Captain of the College football team. We would get our food brought to our room and heat brown sugar and ghee on our stove, to eat it with. Ranjit Singh would bring a tin of pork pickle, and we would also add this to our common food to eat later. Our other friend was Bachittar Singh Randhawa. He would keep a jug of milk near him while studying at night, which he would drink gradually. When he would feel sleepy while studying, he would start doing sit-ups. Narayan Singh was a wrestler; when he would go to the cinema, he would fall asleep. We would ask him, “How was the film?” He would reply, “Friend, the plot of the film was extraordinary.”

We got the opportunity to wear coats and pants for the first time after coming to Lahore. Many boys would treat their night-suits as daywear, and wear them to go to Anarkali Market.

I would ordinarily remain busy in the laboratory, and if I had some free time, I would go to the museum in Lahore. There I became acquainted with art, especially with Kangra art. Those paintings were kept in glass cases, and they portrayed the village life of the hills. One could see women filling water from the step-well (*baoli*), and study kings and queens gazing at flocks of cranes and clouds, in other paintings. The blue-grey clouds would enhance the beauty of the white cranes. Apart from natural beauty, those paintings also had flashes of human love. I would never be satisfied upon seeing those paintings, and I would go to see them over and over again.

In those days, I also met the artist Sobha Singh. He used to live on the first floor of a house near the crossing of Anarkali Market, and there was a fruit-shop under his floor. I used to get sketches of algae inked by him. I was also inspired by his sketches of Punjabi beauties.<sup>110</sup> He was the first artist who had painted Punjabi women and sketched the scenes of Punjabi life. One artist whose work I really liked was Allah Baksh. He had expertise in paintings of Radha-Krishna, and especially in Ram-Leela paintings, and some rich Hindus were his patrons. He would exhibit his paintings in the fairs of Dussehra.

In 1927, I came across Pooran Singh’s English book *Sisters of the Spinning Wheel*.

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<sup>110</sup> Or *sundari* (plural: *sundariyan*), beautiful woman.

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I read that book with relish many times. In those times, Pooran Singh was the first Punjabi whose book had been published by a good British publisher. After reading that, I understood that Pooran Singh was a poet of high stature, all Punjabis should be proud of him.

We would get 3 months of summer holidays. We would spend those holidays in our village. I noticed that I would dream in English for the first 15 days in the village, and in the next 15 days, my dreams would develop the sweet, soft tongue of mixed English and Punjabi. From the third month onwards, the film of English would be completely removed from my tongue, and pure Punjabi could be heard in my dreams. I collected algae from puddles, ponds, and rivers in those holidays. I would keep small tubes in my pocket and insert the algae into them. I would add a few drops of Formalin into the tubes to keep the algae preserved. After returning home, I would observe them with a microscope and take the new ones to the laboratory.

When the exams of BSc Final year came upon me, I started studying determinedly. One evening, my classmate Dharam Pal Bhandari came over and said that he was unable to sleep at night. After listening to him, I also became unable to sleep. I would lie on the roof of the New Hostel and keep listening to the sounds of the clock-tower. At around 4 or 5 am in the morning, I would realise I had not fallen asleep all night. It was in this difficult state of anxiety that I gave my exam. It is fortunate that I passed my exam in first class. When I recall this exam even now, I feel scared. Hazrat Musa had rightly said, “*Ya Khuda*, do not test me.”<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> ‘*Ya Khuda*’: ‘Oh Lord’

Chapter 11  
***Takht Ya Takhta***  
(1930-32)

(P. 90)

I passed MSc Honours in first division in June 1930. I had written my thesis on the algae of Punjab. In writing this thesis, I discovered many new species of algae from ponds in Dasuya Tehsil, the black rivulet and white rivulet of the area, and from the puddles in the fields surrounding the roads. I performed this work under the supervision of Professor S.L. Ghosh. He was so fond of me that he allowed me to work in his room. He was colour-blind and could not identify colours, and so I would tell him about the shades of blue-green algae we were working on.

After reading my result in *The Tribune*, I went to Lahore and met my Professors. I took certificates from Shiv Ram Kashyap, J. B. Sen, S.L. Ghosh, and George Mathai. They wrote those one-page certificates for me with great care. I took those certificates to Principal Dunicliff and he also gave me a very good certificate. I came to Lahore on 21 January 1931 and signed on the roll of honour of the College.

Now, after returning to the village, I was not certain of what I wanted to do to make my ends meet. The field of agriculture was economically depressed at that time, and wheat was selling at 1.5 Rupees a maund. The city people were happy that wheat was cheap, but this had made life difficult for farmers and landowners.

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Even selling half of the entire crop would not be enough for recovering the expenditure of cultivation. The farmers were facing a lot of difficulty. They were leaving agriculture out of difficulty because they were not getting the value of their hard work. People were feeding extra food grains to dogs and animals. The dogs of the village became ‘body-builders’ upon eating the chapattis, and began attacking strangers. This depression also negatively affected the donations given to the saints. No job was in sight.

I thought that I could become a lecturer in some College, because I really liked studying and teaching. I used to give free tuitions in Botany and Zoology to weak students in College, and especially to sportspersons. I still recall the names of Hamid and Brij Lal Sethi from among those boys. Hamid used to ace athletics and Sethi used to play hockey.

In search for a job, I started reading the advertisements in *The Tribune*. I came to know that there was a vacancy for a Botany Lecturer in Aligarh Muslim University. I sent them my application with copies of my certificates attached. But I did not receive a response. Then, a vacancy appeared in Khalsa College, Amritsar. Sardar Charan Singh was a Professor of Botany, and I went to Amritsar to meet him. He advised me that the overall in-charge of that College was Sir Sundar Singh Majithia, and suggested that I should meet him. I wore my best suit, a new tie, and polished shoes, and went to meet him. He was of average height. He looked at me carefully, and I also looked at him carefully. I had a scanty beard and I was not wearing a *kara*. “Do you recite the prayer of *Jap ji Sahib*?” Sardar ji asked. “I know it, but I do not

recite it," I replied. And then I said, "I thought that this was a vacancy for teaching Botany, not for religious teaching." After hearing such questions, I felt disgusted that these religious organisations had no value for wisdom or knowledge. I experienced that Sardar ji did not like me, and the feeling was mutual.

Heartbroken, I returned to the village. I recalled an incident from 1925. I had gone to the Public Library, Lahore and seen the questions of competitive exams on some pamphlets, especially questions of General Knowledge for the I.C.S. After reading them, I realised that I could answer all of them. This was also how I became aware of the I.C.S. exam.<sup>112</sup> The people who would get the first 9-10 ranks would be sent abroad for training and would then be appointed as Deputy Commissioners when they returned to India.

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A lot of occupations in our country have become inherited professions. School-masters' boys become Professors, and Subedars' sons become Lieutenants. I thought that a Tehsildar's son should definitely become a Deputy Commissioner. My father was a successful officer, and I had his presence of mind, wisdom, tact, and practical knowledge. Administration was my family profession. Because of economic depression, only the I.C.S. exam was open for applications and all other competitive exams had been cancelled.

I felt like I was standing at the mouth of a deep pit. I could either have the guts to jump over it and cross it, or... This challenge inspired the passion of limitless hard work in me.

After gathering the information for the exam of the I.C.S., I wrote a letter to the Public Service Commission in Delhi to get a form posted to me. I had to fill that form and give it to the Deputy Commissioner of the zilla. I filled the form and went to Hoshiarpur. There, I came to know that the D.C., N.C. Thakle, had gone to Bharwai. I boarded a bus and reached Bharwai. This place is near the Chintpurni temple in the Shivalik Hills. There is a beautiful bungalow here which the D.C.s of Hoshiarpur used to use in the summer months. I met Thakle and presented my form to him. He was a polite man, and he was kind to me.

It was 7 pm in the evening when I completed that work. I could not find any place to stay for the night, and finally met a Sikh overseer from the Public Works Department who helped me out. That kind man fed me dinner and gave me a cot to sleep on, in his house. I have not forgotten that kind man even now. Many times, I wish that I could meet him and return the favour.

After that, I had to send 50 Rupees as application fees. I did not have a single penny on me. I was ashamed of asking my relatives for money. Finally, I wrote a letter to my friend Niranjana Singh, who was a clerk in the Ministry of Finance with the Government of India, requesting him to pay for my application fees. He submitted the money and this difficulty was tidied over.

My heart was very disturbed after my previous failures. I could only see darkness all around, and I did not know anything about my future.

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<sup>112</sup> This was how Randhawa came to know that the I.C.S. exam was conducted for different government positions. He had no idea about the exam before, and this marked a turning point in his life.

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I went to Harkishan Singh in Gajsinghpur, Bikaner, on 2 February. There, our Father had bought 30 murabbas for us six brothers, from the rent of our property in Montgomery, by paying for the property in instalments. There a murabba was equivalent to 16 acres and it was valued at 2500 Rupees. Because of economic depression, the farmers there could not even afford this amount; there was a lot of restlessness amongst them.

We had set up kutchra rooms for ourselves and for our workers. Our accounts were managed by Munshi Ram Singh. He was very clever in most matters but was weak at accounts. Because that was a new settlement, the ration we had to buy for the workers would be taken on loan from the Marwari *Baniyas* of Gajsinghpur, and they would write as large a loan amount in their books as they pleased. Our workers were Dalits who had been sent by brother Amrik Singh from Chak 51/12 L, Tehsil Chichawatni, district Montgomery.

I used to live in a kutchra room and there was a water-tank in front of it. There were no trees there, and we had planted rind plants on the banks of the irrigation canals, as these plants were the primary flora of that area. I got a thatched structure built near a canal and set up a loosely woven cot under it. I kept a thick round pillow covered with khadi cloth on the cot for me to sit. I started my penance on this cot. I would start studying at 7 am in the morning after having milk and get off the cot at 1 pm in the afternoon to eat two chapattis with black lentil and curd. I would rest for 1 hour and start studying again at 2 pm. I would keep studying till 6 pm in the evening. Then I would stroll on the banks of the canal for an hour. When the larger canal would be blocked, many fish would remain in the smaller channels and become food for crows and eagles.

When I was preparing for the I.C.S. exam, I came to know that Bikaner's Maharaja Ganga Singh would come to Gajsinghpur to listen to the complaints of the farmers. I also left my studies and reached the station. Many officers of the princely state had reached there on tour. Their peons spread into the villages like a swarm of locusts. They collected several cots and large quantities of milk from many houses for the service of the officers. They could not drink all the milk, and so they boiled the remaining milk into *khoya*. This was when I personally witnessed how much abuse of authority occurred when officers came on tour.

Ganga Singh's special car came to Gajsinghpur. The *Bagdi* people of that area had tied red turbans and began shouting slogans of 'Provider' and 'Welcome' for the Raja. On the other side, the free and courageous Jatts of Punjab started kicking up dust and began shouting, "Return our money, we do not want these murabbas."

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Jai Gopal Sethi was the senior officer of that canal colony. He was a hard-hearted man and he did not want to give any concessions to the farmers. I told the farmers that shouting slogans does not yield good results, we should talk with wisdom. I went ahead and explained the problems of the farmers to the Raja in English. I advised him that loan-payments should be liberalised and eased; that would lead to peace in the area. He heard me with arrogance, but I felt that my words had some impact on him.

After that experience, I resumed my studies and we were happy that the swarm of locusts of the officers and their staff had gone ahead.

The I.C.S. competitive exam was going to happen from 11-26 January in Metcalf House, Delhi. Some years ago, this House, which is situated on the banks of the Yamuna in Old Delhi, used to be Metcalf's personal residence, and after retiring, he had given it to the Government.

There was a yellow bungalow near the Khyber Pass market, which is there till date. Many clerks of the Government of India used to live in that. My friend Niranjan Singh Bains also used to live there. It had a large room wherein 12 cots had been set up. They set up one cot for me there. Those clerks comprised Hindus and Sikhs of every caste. When we would wake up in the morning, then Ganga Singh would call out for his friend Pandit Daulat Ram Sharma, and say, "Pandit ji." He would respond, "Yes, ji." Ganga Singh would say, "Cover your face, I have to get up." All of us would laugh upon hearing this.

I got the 19<sup>th</sup> rank out of 173 candidates in that competitive exam which took place in January 1931. I got lesser marks in Botany and Zoology, which I had expected to do well in. I observed that in these competitive exams, subjects also compete with one another. Those who had English Literature, Politics, History and Urdu Literature, could get more marks than Science students by working less hard. I also realised that my preparation had not been strategic. I left Gajsinghpur on 1 January 1932. When I walked with Ram Singh towards the railway station, the luggage in my trunk on his shoulders, I saw a flock of deer crossing the street across us.

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Ram Singh said, "This was a bad omen." I scored the fifth rank and there were nine vacancies in the services.<sup>113</sup> That was how I became successful. But until the results came, Ram Singh's superstition about deer kept piercing my heart like a thorn. It would have been so good if that stupid man had kept quiet.

When I went to Delhi for the I.C.S. exams of 1932, I thought that the bungalow near Khyber Pass was a bad omen, and so decided to find accommodation near Metcalf House where the exam was being held. There, I saw a new bungalow in the street which had pink curtains. I went inside and met a fair, young Lala ji. He showed me a small room and asked me for 50 Rupees per month as rent. I accepted his rate and gave him 10 Rupees as an advance. The next day, when I went to the bungalow with my bedding and books, the Lala refused our agreement and also did not return my advance payment. I was devastated, because I was financially very weak, and the 10 Rupees of those times would be equivalent to 200 Rupees today. I could never forget the deception of that Lala.

When I became the Deputy Commissioner of Delhi in 1946, I decided to locate that Lala. I used to recall my poverty and helplessness in 1932. I felt like Dick Whittington reaching London with a small bag of his belongings, and then becoming the Lord Mayor of the city. I found that bungalow and my assistant also found the Lala ji. I was sitting in my office in the D.C. residence at 17, Rajpur Road and Lala ji entered. I asked him, "Lala ji, do you remember that in January 1932, a Sikh youth had come to see your bungalow?" "Yes." "He gave you 10

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<sup>113</sup> He did not clear the exams at the first attempt. So, rank 19 in 1931, 5 in 1932.

Rupees as advance, which you refused to return.” Lala ji was stunned, and he turned pale. But he did not say anything. I said, “I am that Sikh youth.” Lala ji became nervous and terrified. I said, “You do not need to worry, you can give 500 Rupees as donation to the library at Mehrauli, and I will forgive my loan of 1932.”

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Lala ji instantly made the donation and saved himself.

Now I want to talk about the competitive exam of I.C.S. once again. It is perhaps the most difficult exam. Our exams kept happening for about a month, and then we gave a viva. I could not forget the difficulty of that exam for many years. Many times, I would dream that I was writing exams in the hall of Metcalf House and I had forgotten everything. Hazrat Musa has rightly said, “Oh Khuda, do not test me.”

Chapter 12  
**Journey Abroad**  
 (1932-1934)

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The results of the I.C.S. competitive examination were published in *The Tribune* newspaper on 11 June 1932. After years of hardships and hard work, this was the first news that gave joy to my depressed heart in a long time. Letters of congratulation from friends and relatives kept coming for ten days. Real joy is one where our friends partake of the happiness. The people of my village and area were the happiest. They left their work and came to receive me at the station; they were accompanied by the school band of Islamia High School, Dasuya.

After that, I stayed in the village for some days and then went to my friend Niranjan Singh Bains in Shimla. He used to live in Bharadi along with 10-12 other clerks. I would go to the pine forests after having breakfast, and would rest under their shade. The air would be full of the fragrance of pine resin, and the soft rustling of the leaves would give peace to the mind. Clusters of red rhododendron flowers imparted even more grace to the mountains. On the mountains across from me, the Pahari women wearing necklaces of pearls and stones, cut grass with their scythes. The quietude and peace of the mountains made me hale and hearty again, and a lot of the pressure of the examination finally left my mind.

I was married on 15 August 1932 in Narangwal village, the village of Dr. Harbhajan Singh.

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I and Iqbal reached Jalandhar in Doctor sahib's Ford Motor on 16 August. Iqbal was wearing a light-blue dupatta over her salwar-suit. I kept gazing at her innocent, beautiful face, but could not talk to her because I was shy. We stayed at Pandit Sita Ram's house in Jalandhar. We spent the afternoon there and reached Bodlan in the evening. Because the path to the village was unmetalled, we left the motorcar at Garna Sahib station. Iqbal climbed into a palanquin and I mounted a horse.

At that time, a letter from the Chief Secretary of Punjab had arrived home, saying that P. & O. Liner *SS Comorin* had been arranged for our travel abroad, and that the ship would leave from Bombay on 3 September 1932. I reached Bombay on September 2. I sat in the first-class compartment of the train for the first time, for that journey. I met many Sikh people on the stations along the way, and all of them greeted me. Because of their small population, there is a lot of brotherhood among Sikhs, and they help each other in other countries.

Our ship left the port of Bombay on September 3. That was my first sea journey. The flying fish would look very beautiful from the deck. They would stream through the blue water like daggers, jump into the sky and then vanish into the water. We could see light in the water at night, it looked like thousands of fireflies gleaming. This is called phosphorescence. Sea breeze is full of ozone, and one feels very hungry during sea journeys. That was my first experience of eating English food with forks and knives in the Dining Hall. I would look at the English travellers around me and copy them. Two-three English words, 'Thank you', 'Please'



and 'Sorry', are symbols of English civilisation. Learning them is important, and one is considered civilised only upon speaking them at the appropriate time.

Our journey was fine for three days, after which our ship came under the influence of monsoon winds. The ship would sway, and so the travellers lay down. That was my first experience of sea sickness. Now we could not even go to the Dining Hall for eating food, and the English steward would bring food into our cabin. As long as our ship passed through the Arabian Sea, I kept lying down. I would ask myself, what trouble have I taken on, it would have been better if I had qualified for the P.C.S., and I would have been able to avoid the distress of that sea journey.

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Moreover, the ship also smelled of rotten fish. This is true of all ships no matter how clean they may be. This odour also sickens one.

Finally, the ship reached Port Said and we thanked God for having reached safely. There, we saw Egyptians wearing red caps. They wore cloaks and sold sets of cards with naked women's pictures on them to the travellers. Many of them had horse-carts. Travelling with them was scary because they looked like goons. I did not have a woollen dressing gown, and they could be bought cheap from a big store there. So, going to the city was important for me. Four or five of us probationers went to the city together. The cart driver asked us on the way if we needed "red women". When all of us shook our heads saying no, he was surprised. I stood in front of a big store in Port Said. A boy came and asked me if I wanted him to polish my boots. I said no. He brushed my brown shoes with black polish and ran away. We quickly bought a dressing gown, returned to the ship, and thanked God. I got the impression that the lower class of Egyptians has poor morals, and the middle-class is lazy and hedonistic. The men keep sitting in front of the shops drinking coffee or smoking the hooka, and the women walk in the markets in groups, their faces covered with black burqas. It appears as though the whole community is idle.

After our journey in the Red Sea was over, we heaved a sigh of relief. Then we crossed the Suez Canal. There were sand dunes on both sides of the canal, and the ship moved slowly. The water of the Mediterranean Sea is deep blue, and it looked very beautiful from the ship. Some days later, we reached the port of Malta. There was a group of warships there. The land there was rocky and had a thin layer of soil. We Punjabis do not value the soil because our layers of soil are very deep. One can value soil only after seeing those rocky islands, and we realise how fortunate we Punjabis are.

Two days after setting off from Bombay, the ship reached Marseilles. We were happy to be relieved of the sea journey. Marseilles is a lovely city, and French people, and especially French women are beautiful.

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After stepping out of the ship, a man met us and asked us if we wanted to watch blue films. None of us was interested in that type of cinema and we refused. A ten-year-old boy was

laughing at me. I lovingly placed my hand on his shoulder, but he got very scared of my turban and beard.

We boarded the train in the evening. The beautiful country of France could be seen from the large windows of the train. There were orchards of apples and grapes on both sides of the railway track. There were lines of poplar trees on both sides of the roads. Men and women wearing blue clothes worked in the fields. The houses had sloping roofs which were painted reddish orange. Small rivers and rivulets could be seen in some places, ducks could be seen swimming in them. Perhaps God has not given as much beauty to any other part of earth as He has given to France.

We reached Paris from Marseilles and saw the beautiful museum of the Louvre which has Leonardo's painting of Mona Lisa. France has a special place in the world in terms of painting. This country has the oldest tradition of art. 20,000 years ago, French people made paintings of horses, elephants, and wild bison in the caves of Dordogne. After that, from the 15<sup>th</sup> century onwards, France gave birth to hundreds of great artists, from among whom Goya, Boucher, Ingres, Renoir, Seurat, Monet, Degas, Delacroix, and Gauguin are world famous.

We reached Calais, and boarded a small ship from there; there was only some space for us to sit on its deck. We crossed the English Channel and reached Dover. The limestone-white rocks of Dover looked beautiful at the edge of the blue sea from our position on the ship.

Then our feet touched the ground of England, the country which had given birth to famous scientists and writers whose books and inventions had brought about a revolution in the world of agriculture and industry. This was the same 'abroad' (*vilayet*) where the sun never set on the empire.

We boarded a train to go to London. One could see greenery on both sides of the track, or instead see large advertisements which inspired the readers to buy that company's whisky, beer, cigarettes, bread, tomato sauce etc.

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They advertised for the companies which had paid for installing them on both sides of the track. Fat brown cows grazed in the fields. The houses ordinarily had two floors, and they had clothing lines for drying clothes at the back; one could see their colourful clothes fluttering in the air. We could occasionally see apple orchards which had green and pink apples.

Chapter 13  
**London**  
(1932-1934)

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My twin brother Rajinder Singh and Barma Nand Bhanot, a good friend of ours, were studying in London. They met me at Victoria Station and took me to 79, Sinclair Road, Shepherd's Bush. This was a Sikh gurdwara in London, and if any student faced financial trouble, he could stay there on cheap rent.

Rajinder and Bhanot advised me that we should look for a good apartment now that I could pay for the accommodation. They found an apartment in Golders Green; it was called Number 5, Greenfield Gardens. The landlady of that house, Mrs. Hayes, was a retired army-man's wife. There we paid 30 shillings per week; this included the rent of the room, breakfast, and dinner. After adding the fares of the bus and the Underground to this amount, one person could live in the city on £10 a month.

I had to go to three Colleges because of my studies — the School of Oriental Studies, King's College and London School of Economics. We would reach the Vale after walking from home, go to Rodborough Road and then reach the railway station for Golders Green. London's Underground is the best means of transportation in the city. Lakhs of people travel by it every day.

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This operates on electricity and quickly picks up speed. When it stops at the station, the doors open quickly, and travellers get inside. Those who reach first sit on the benches, and the rest hold the overhead straps and stand. Most of our studies happened at the School of Oriental Studies, Finsbury Circus. Mr. [S. G.] Vesey-Fitzgerald taught us law, and Professor C.C. Davis taught us Hindi and European History. I was the only student of History, and Davis and I would sit together and discuss History. Many people thought that I was a Professor. Davis was Welsh and talked openly. He said that the British had squeezed India like a lemon, and that they would have to leave the country in the coming years. Their eyes were now directed towards Africa.

Fitzgerald was a retired judge. He had white hair and he was a polite man. He talked to us very politely and made us work hard on our studies. Sir Denison Ross was a Professor there and was a great scholar of Persian.

Most of the probationers of the I.C.S. would take admission in Oxford and Cambridge, other than London. I had to take admission in London because of my brother. We London probationers had made an association of which I was a Secretary, while Drukar<sup>114</sup> was the President. When the earthquake struck Quetta, I collected £200 as aid for the devastation-hit people of Quetta.

No nation can compete with England in terms of politeness and etiquette. If a stranger forgets his way, English people leave their work and guide him in the right direction. They

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<sup>114</sup> Transliterated.

drink, but moderately, and riots, conflicts and profanity do not happen anywhere. If they play the radio or musical instruments in their house, they play them softly so that nobody else gets disturbed. If a woman or old man is standing in a bus or train, young men vacate their seats for them. Even if someone is a beggar, he will sell matchsticks or play the mouth organ. Most of the beggars of this kind are retired army-men whose legs or arms are missing.

This does not mean that there are no thugs, pickpockets, and swindlers there. The following would be written in big letters on a shop on Parliament Street: "This shop is closing, so everything is 40% off." I went inside and saw the prices of watches and knives. The prices were more than those of other shops.

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I lived in London for two years, but that shop kept working and did not shut down.

I took a trip to Austria in my summer holidays and saw the beautiful area of Carinthia. There are a lot of lakes there. When I returned to London, I saw that my bank account was empty of money. I had left my chequebook in the drawer of my dressing table before leaving. Mrs. Hayes wrote two fake cheques, one of £5 and the other of £8 from my chequebook. She encashed the 5 Pound cheque, but I caught hold of the second cheque. I went to Grindlays Bank and told them about my problem. They gave me £5, but they did not agree to file a case against that woman. I was upset that that honest nation also had such dishonest people.

We decided to shift out of our accommodation. We took a room for £2 per week in Number 2, Parley Avenue, which was the next street over. Some days later, we saw that a truck had come to Number 5, Greenfield Gardens and taken all the furniture away. Then another truck came and took away the sewing machine. A third truck took away the refrigerator. The fact was that nothing was owned by Mrs. Hayes, she had taken all these things from a hire-purchase.

Mrs. Thompson was the landlady of Number 2, Parley Avenue. She also called herself Madam Silvia Scott, and she prepared horoscopes. She would get numerous letters from clients regarding their horoscopes and would respond to their queries by reading their horoscope associated calendars.

Margaret, Mrs. Thompson's daughter, took great care of me; she would lovingly prepare evening tea for me. She would also go on walks with me, and I fell in love with her. However, I was also concerned about my household back home. I had asked for Iqbal's hand in marriage, and her innocent face kept appearing in my mind. I told Margaret that I was married, and I could only give her friendship. So, she should not dream of marriage with me. She was surprised at my honesty, but she understood.

London is a large city, but if you do not have a friend there, you may feel lonely and sorrowful. English people have cold temperaments, and they are not friendly. Neighbours do not know each other, and nobody goes to the other's house without being invited.

Someone had asked me about the primary difference between the village people of India and the people of Western countries.

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I answered that we have hearts and love, and we share each other's joys and sorrows, but even if those people are clever and hard-working, they are cold. They do not see anything beyond themselves. Even their flowers have colour but no fragrance. If some of them have fragrance, it is next to nothing. Our flowers may not have vivid colour, but they are always fragrant. Pooran Singh understood this correctly about Western people — finding large-hearted people there is rare, there is a huge chasm between husband and wife, and mother and son. Neighbour does not care about neighbour. Every English person's house is his fort, its fence is strong, and its main door is locked with a powerful padlock. First of all, no one goes to someone's house without being invited, and if some lost soul does turn up at someone's doorstep by mistake, he is not even offered water. They are so cold to each other, that this trait surprised me. If you see them sitting in trains, you are even more shocked. Every man sits, his face hidden behind a newspaper. I came to understand the nature of this cold and phlegmatic nation only after a year. Alright, even though London is full of lakhs of men and women, it is more desolate than the desert of Arabia for an outsider without friends here.

I have a habit of walking. I would go to the British Museum when the weather was bad. This building has miles-long galleries, and I would keep looking at paintings and statues for two to three hours. This way I would be able to walk, and also become familiar with those knowledge-systems. I saw Kangra paintings in that museum. I was happy to see one of those paintings. That was the painting of Vasakasajja Nayika, and the museum has also published cards of this painting. A beauty wearing a red *ghagara* and blue dupatta sits on a bed of leaves near the river. She is waiting for her lover. There are flower-laden bushes behind her, and the moon is adorning the sky. This painting portrays the beauty and suppleness of the Indian woman with great skill. When I would think of that painting while sitting by myself, I would think about the girl lost in love waiting for her lover even now, I would miss the Kangra paintings which I saw in Lahore.

The parks of London become extraordinarily beautiful in the months of April-May.

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The wooden fences of the houses become laden with roses. The oaks and sycamores which were bereft of leaves in winter, bear green shoots. The grass becomes greener. Women and children come to the parks in colourful clothes. English women are beautiful, their faces bloom like roses because of the cold and humid air. Natural beauty combines with human beauty and this country becomes fairyland in reality.

### **Part III: Work**

Chapter 14  
**Saharanpur — The House of Orchards**  
 (1934-1936)

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My training completed on 6 October 1934, following which I was posted in the province of U.P. After some days, I came to know that I had been posted in Saharanpur. This zilla is near the boundary of Punjab.

I decided that my return journey should be conducted through France, Switzerland, and Italy. I booked my heavy luggage in the ship and kept a light handbag with myself for my train journey. When I was about to set off, I came to know that my passport had also gone with the heavy luggage. I went to the India Office that very moment and met Mr. Nester to explain about my stupid oversight. He got a new passport prepared for me within two hours.

While leaving London, my heart was full. After living there for two years, I had formed a bond with the city, and even later, whenever I got the opportunity to go to London again, I felt like I had reached my second home.

I reached Paris from Dover and visited the church of Notre Dame and Museum of Louvre. Thousands of people sat under the shade of large umbrellas, slowly drinking coffee or wine on both sides of the markets of Paris. It looked like a nation of idle people, but leisure is also important in life.

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Only those people can take interest in science, art and literature who have no worries about food. This is why art and literature have reached their zenith here, and the name of France is so well-regarded in the arena of culture.

I went to Zurich from Paris, and after crossing the snow-laden mountains of the Alps, I entered Italy. I spent one day in Florence and visited its famous churches.

Finally, I reached Rome and saw the great church of St. Peter. There, I also visited the most pleasing Vatican Museum of the Pope. This has the great paintings of Leonardo and Michelangelo. I lived in a small inn to save money; the inn had simple food and a small, clean room for me to stay in. That was the time of Mussolini, and Fascist soldiers wearing black uniforms used to roam around in the markets and streets. They looked like thugs.

I went to Naples from Rome and saw the ruins of Pompeii. The Vesuvius volcano lies behind this city; black smoke could be seen coming from the mountain. I felt like I was in India when I was in Naples. The people would talk loudly, and I also saw scenes of rioting and fights in the markets. Washed clothes dried on clotheslines in the windows of every house.

I boarded *Lloyd Tristino's Victoria* ship from Naples and reached Bombay. Bombay looked very filthy in comparison with the cities of Europe. The people were also lazy, and

dark-skinned. My eyes had become used to seeing white men and women after living in London for two years, and so Indians looked more dark-skinned than usual.<sup>115</sup>

I got two large trunks booked for Gojra at the railway station. The clerk took two hours for that small task. If I had placed 1 Rupee in his palm, my work would have happened quickly, but that was against my conscience. This clearly explained how much our nation had fallen.

I had two other companions in my coupe in the first-class compartment of the train — a Muslim trader and a Hindu. I was re-growing my beard and hair, and when I removed my turban, I looked like a maulvi. The Muslim met me very warmly, greeted me with *Assalamu-alaikum*, and started bad-mouthing Hindus. I tied my turban in the morning, and he became embarrassed because of his faux pas.

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I was very passionate about the independence of the nation, and when I told the Hindu traveller about my ideas, that our country should be free of the English, he was greatly affected. He happily called for tea and food, and when I started paying the waiter for the bill, he stopped me and said, “You are my guest today.” This was the warmth and love of the nation which could not be found in Europe.

I spent two days in Gojra and boarded the train to Saharanpur with Iqbal. The train stopped at Amritsar station and a Muslim fakir, stocky, well-built, and goon-like, stood before me to beg for alms. I do not give money to beggars, especially when they are not disabled. When he did not get anything from me, the thug started insulting me. I kept quiet, but Iqbal scolded him.

The train reached Saharanpur in the evening and we went to meet the Collector of the zilla, Mr. Bates. He had arranged for our accommodation in the P.W.D. bungalow. We placed our luggage in the tonga and arrived at the bungalow. There, we lived for about a week, and looked for houses to stay in, in the meantime. We ultimately found a bungalow near the courts. This had two floors, and a forest officer named Manohardas Chaturvedi lived on the upper floor. He was fond of hunting and chatting. When he would start sharing his stories of the hunt, he would make us forget the exigencies of time. He was old, but his wife was young, beautiful, and fashionable. She would spend all day bedecking herself, and we could not befriend her.

The zilla of Saharanpur was famous for its mangoes, lychees, loquats, and sugarcane; sugarcane so soft that its peel could be torn off in one go. The city would be full of flies during mango season.

The villages of that area were in a bad state. The Jain *Baniyas* of Saharanpur were the landlords. Each landlord owned multiple villages. They had no interest in agriculture, or in bettering the conditions of their tenants, and were only concerned about land revenue. Watching the dance performances of courtesans and sending gifts to the officers were their special hobbies. The courtesans also cleverly fleeced them and took gold jewellery as gifts. Shammo was the most famous amongst them; she had captured the attention of a rich

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<sup>115</sup> Randhawa uses the word ‘*kaala*’ which is literally translated into black. *Saanvla* would imply dark-complexioned.



businessman named Kanwar Kishori Saran. He would greatly enjoy dressing her in English trousers and shirts, apart from making her sing.

After seeing the depressing condition of the villages and villagers, I felt inspired to work for their improvement.

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I was the Secretary of the Zilla *Gram Sudhar* Committee,<sup>116</sup> and I had also been impacted by the work of Brane<sup>117</sup> Sahib. Mangal Kiran Jain had started a newspaper called *People's Journal*. I would often write articles on village improvement in this newspaper. At that time, more attention was being paid to schemes of sanitation and cleanliness. I had a lot of *roshan-daan*<sup>118</sup> made and installed in the houses of the village. Once when I was touring the village, I saw that mats had been stuffed into the roshan-daan. When I asked, they told me that they were scared that their venomous relatives or enemies would throw opium drugs into their houses through those openings and have them caught on false charges.

It was difficult to settle down in a city like Saharanpur after having lived in London. I felt most troubled by having to sit on a chair for five to six hours. I was used to walking, and sitting on the chair to note down the testimonies of witnesses for many hours was difficult for me. Slowly, I developed the habit of sitting on the chair, but I would be happy while I was on tour — I would mount the horse and ride for a long time in the forest. Wild roosters, peacocks, barasingha deer and lions could be found in the Shivalik forests.

I would occasionally go to the cinema. After the film ended, the national song of England — *God Save The King* would be performed, and many people would start leaving the hall. The Englishmen would stand at attention. One time, I was putting my spectacles in my pocket and the national anthem was playing. An English civil surgeon was looking at me, and after the film ended, he asked me why I was not standing at attention. I stopped going to the cinema after that incident.

There was a lot of open space around our bungalow, but it was full of grass and weeds. I would ask the peons, "Please clean it," but they would shirk from that work. I bought two spades and began de-weeding the ground. The peons had to join me out of shame and the ground finally got cleared.

I was also seeing the problem of untouchability in my country, especially after spending two years abroad. I thought that this disease should be rooted out through practice. I kept a Dalit man named Bhajna from my village as my servant. His work entailed serving food, and if relatives or guests came home, they would eat food served by Bhajna.<sup>119</sup> One day, a Jatt Sikh officer came to our house for a meal. The meat was served in a large bowl and everybody took

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<sup>116</sup> Lit., *Zilla* Village Improvement Committee

<sup>117</sup> As transliterated.

<sup>118</sup> Ventilator for skylight, see Glossary.

<sup>119</sup> Even the shadow of an untouchable person is impure and necessitates frequent washing according to caste rules. Taking food from the hands of a Dalit man is even more profane. Hence Randhawa's was a significant subversion. Bhajna's tongue-in-cheek comment to the upper-caste officer must be understood in this context.

their share. When that officer had to serve himself, he kept the bowl in front of himself and started dipping his chapatti directly into the bowl. Bhajna saw this and said,

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“Sardar ji, you acted like a Jatt.”

Iqbal was 17 years-old, and she had studied until class 10. I decided to teach her English. I bought her Nehru’s book, *Letters to His Daughter*. I would read out a chapter to her every day. The poor girl kept learning but became afraid of me. You cannot be a husband and teacher at the same time. The woman is born for love, and not for teaching to. If you have to study or teach, somebody else should do the teaching.

Iqbal also had the habit of arguing. Whatever I would say to her, she would say the opposite. I thought about what mould to develop her personality in. I told her that she should make food, and that she should learn how to decorate the house, but she should not try to be a ‘Mem’.<sup>120</sup> Indian Memos sit on chairs all day, fully decked up, while the servants do all their work. They go to clubs in the evening, drink whisky and play bridge with men. I had no interest in such a life. I went to the Saharanpur club one or two times, but I found that I could not befriend anyone. The English would sit separately and talk to each other, while the Indians would offer them whisky and flatter them. I also realised that Iqbal could not shape herself into that kind of life, because she understood English but could not speak it properly. Women were not considered socially smart unless they could say interesting things in English. Not knowing English was considered a deficiency in those times, and that also affected my lifestyle. I began spending my free time in domestic life and in studying; I distanced myself from the club.

One day when I was sitting in the court and listening to a case about theft, I came to know that an accident had occurred at home. I went home on a bicycle and found that the fingers of Iqbal’s right hand had become pressed and stuck in the folding space of a deckchair. When I asked her, I came to know that when her hand was caught in the folding chair, she had lifted the chair and gone to the neighbour upstairs, despite being in pain. The neighbour’s servant replied, “Memsahib is sleeping.” Instead of making her wake up, the poor girl had returned downstairs. I noticed that despite being in so much pain, she kept calm, and there were no tears in her eyes.

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I had a carpenter called home. He cut the seat of the chair and released her fingers. Her fingers had become blue, and we also did not know if her bones were fractured or not. I took Iqbal to the hospital in a tonga, and got her hand treated.

This accident brought about a change in my life. I developed true love for Iqbal. I started respecting her from the bottom my heart. I realised that she is a courageous, powerful woman capable of combating the difficulties of life. Secondly, she is large-hearted, and she generously gives away everything she has. She empathises with everyone. She gave her Singer sewing

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<sup>120</sup> ‘Mem’, from ‘Madam’ ‘Mem Sahib’ or Englishwoman. Later also used for Indian women of the middle classes or those with higher social standing.

machine to my sister Mindo and gave all her utensils to my brother Rajinder. Iqbal had eight gold bangles, two clips and a gold necklace. In those days, I believed that women should not wear jewellery. A woman's beauty lies in her good health, and good health results from exercise and a balanced diet. I advised Iqbal to sell her jewellery. She agreed with my advice and sold her jewellery. This way, we ceased to be worried about theft.

Character is more important than being fashionable. By character, I do not only mean sexual character;<sup>121</sup> it means being honest, patient, having the courage to struggle against difficulty, being empathetic, forgetting the self and shouldering others' burdens. Iqbal has all these qualities. If a family member would fall sick, she would attend to all their needs and remain awake for nights, caring for them. She would understand others' pain. She was so used to working that she would not sit idle. She would cook, sew, beautify the house, and attend to guests. Because we did not have a very social life, I spent most of my free time reading and writing.

Bates was transferred, and J.F. Sail was appointed as the Collector in his place. Sail was a heavy man, and his signatures looked like the coiled spring of a chair. Someone who signs in such a loopy way is not a decision-maker. Sail had this flaw, and this was why a large riot broke out in Kanpur, which he had to take responsibility for.

Wintertime had come; the officers used to tour their territories in this season. Sail took me along. Both of us would travel ten miles every day and spend the night in tents. Those tents were set up in mango orchards. Sail's wife and sister were accompanying him for the tour.

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Sail would wear a black suit for dinner. I would also have dinner with them.

We would mount our horses in the morning. Sail would hunt for snipes while I would question the Patwaris. Sail had poor aim; he fired a number of times but could only kill two snipes.

I took a *Kanungo* along, rode the horse for eleven miles and reached Roorkee. The *Kanungo* asked for a holiday the next morning, he said he had dysentery.

Roorkee is a very pretty town. It is on the banks of the Ganga and there is also an Engineering College there. It has the Shivalik hills in the background. There I met Sir William Stamp. He was a famous engineer who had established the tradition of using tube-wells in U.P. He loved horse-riding. He would attach a trailer to his motorcar, the trailer would contain his horse. He would stop the car on the side of the road, take the horse out and ride into the villages to supervise work.

I also loved horse-riding. I had a fast mare. She was black-brown, and there was a white mark on her forehead. When she would gallop, she would bend her neck and kick her powerful legs down, unseating poor riders. I was aware of her habit, so I would tighten the reins whenever she would bow her head.

Once I had gone to inspect the Deoband police station. The Thanedar sent his mare for me at the railway station. As soon as I sat on her, the mare started galloping fast, she was soon out of my control. The branches of trees bordering the roads were sunk low. I pushed my head

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<sup>121</sup> As printed. Here possibly means moral character.

down and pressed my legs to the mare's body. The mare kept galloping and then finally stopped directly at the police station. After this experience, I decided to never ride any Thanedar's horse. The Thanedars would ordinarily keep horses just for show, and because they were always tied up, they became dangerous to ride when freed.

I was then appointed as a Second-Class Magistrate. I went on tour to the hilly area of Saharanpur with Kashinath Raghunath Damle, the Joint Magistrate. Damle was a very warm man and I learned a lot from him. We would have our meals together during our tour. Damle was a Maratha and his food was cooked with coconut. One day, both of us were going to Behat and happened upon a dry choe on the way. Damle made his horse gallop upon seeing the open space, and I also pushed my mare to ride faster; my mare had gone ahead while Damle had fallen behind. He had fallen off his horse and was dusting his coat.

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We changed our bungalow and began living in a larger house. We had half the house while Deputy Collector Parduman Singh had the other half which was at the rear. A baby girl was born in our house; she was very weak, and she would often wake up at night. Once, we were sleeping in the veranda, when the girl cried, and we woke up.<sup>122</sup> We saw that all the doors of Parduman Singh's house were open, and his men were fast asleep in the veranda. Iqbal quietly woke me up. She switched on the torch, while I loaded the revolver and fired two shots into the bushes. When we woke up in the morning, we saw that four or five of Parduman Singh's trunks were lying open in the bushes, and their contents were scattered. We came to know that the thieves were scared off by the firing, and so they left the valuables and ran away. Parduman Singh began to thank me. We asked him to thank the weak child who had woken us up at the right moment.

I became the S.D.O. of Nukkad Tehsil in 1935. I worked for village improvement in that Tehsil as well. I was transferred to Faizabad in October 1936 and we bid farewell to Saharanpur, its orchards, and people.

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<sup>122</sup> He writes '*ladki*' or girl to refer to his daughter, whereas, '*beti*' or '*dhi*' would directly translate to daughter.

Chapter 15  
**Faizabad**  
**The Experience of Village Improvement**  
 (1936-1938)

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Faizabad was the capital of Awadh during the reign of Nawab Shuja ud-Daula. Now it is a forgotten town. The zillas of Awadh were considered inferior in comparison with the zillas of Western U.P. and if any officer were transferred from West to East, he would request the authorities to cancel the posting. Because of the 'Talukdari system', the villages had a lot of poverty. One Talukdar used to be the owner of a hundred villages, and the real workers of the villages used to be their tenants. In order to take land revenue from them, the Talukdars had appointed Zilledars, while they comfortably lived in bungalows in Faizabad and Lucknow.

We got transferred to Faizabad in October 1936. We took a house on rent in the Faizabad cantonment for our accommodation. We got this house at 40 Rupees per month. It had four small and two big rooms, and the roof was tiled. The Guptar Ghat, where Shri Ram Chandra ji had passed away, was nearby. Guptar Ghat is at the banks of the Sarayu river, and it is worth watching the sun set in the evening over it. The sky becomes red, and the setting sun's reflection looks beautiful in the waters of the river. It is because of such scenes that 'Shaam-e-Awadh' is famous.<sup>123</sup> I would often go for a stroll to Guptar Ghat during sunset, sit on the banks of the river and savour this scene.

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A number of red-faced monkeys flourished in Guptar Ghat. Many visitors would consider them Hanuman's army and offer them roasted gram. Those monkeys were so unafraid that if a woman walked past them with a bag on her head, they would attack her, and open the bag to loot it of all its food.

Those monkeys would also come into the houses. That was why it was impossible to grow flowers or vegetables in our houses. Once, I shot a monkey sitting on a tamarind tree; it fell off. It looked at me like it was a wounded person. I too looked at it, and felt like I had killed a human being. After this, I could never kill a monkey again. The female monkeys would scratch one another's heads and remove lice. If there was any danger nearby, they would take their children and climb the trees. An old monkey was the chief of the whole monkey group; it was ready to attack everyone.

Mr. Nicholson was the Deputy Commissioner of Faizabad. He was an experienced officer and so four I.C.S. officers other than I were training under him. One of them, Adit Nath Jha, used to share my bungalow. Adit was the son of Sir Ganga Nath Jha, and his elder brother Amar Nath Jha was the Vice-Chancellor of Allahabad University. He was very fat and so we used to call him 'Ganesh'. He was happy-go-lucky, and he was fond of talking in English. He

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<sup>123</sup> *Shaam-e-Awadh*, lit., evenings in Awadh. Mentioned as a phrase because these evenings are considered a phenomenon in themselves.

would also laugh like Englishmen. Later, he proved himself to be a proficient officer, and served the masses very well.

At that time, I was earning 600 Rupees per month; I had four servants, a gardener working at 10 Rupees per month, a cook working at 15 Rupees, a groom at 15 Rupees, and a driver at 20 Rupees. I and Jha would jointly give the cleaner 5 Rupees. I had a mare and a motorcar. Those were inexpensive times, and the 600 Rupees of that time would be equivalent to 6000 Rupees today.

The tombs of Nawab Shuja ud-Daula and his Begum are situated in Faizabad. There is a rose-garden around Shuja ud-Daula's tomb, this is why this garden is known by the name of 'Gulab-badi.' Its entry path is very beautiful.

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Its door has engravings of two fish, its edges have *jharkha* windows and extended shelves. The dome of the tomb is onion-shaped, and there are *minars* on all four sides. The tomb looks beautiful from afar.

Assemblies of official functions were organised in Gulab-badi. On one occasion, the Commissioner's durbar was held there. Mr. A.G. Sheriff was the Commissioner and I sat with him in a buggy led by four horses. Our buggy crossed the marketplace and reached Gulab-badi. Many people paid their respects to us on the way, Sheriff did not respond to them. I saw this and started responding to their greetings. When Sheriff saw my response, he scolded me and said that when two officers, one senior and the other junior, go to an official function together, only the senior officer responds to such greetings. Sheriff had typed his speech on paper, which he had kept in the cuff of his shirt. This paper fell somewhere on the way. When he was called to give the speech, he kept trying to find it on his person.

Ayodhya is three to four miles away from Faizabad, and this pilgrimage site gets a lot of visitors. A huge festival is organised here on the festival of Janamashtami. The Raja of Ayodhya had kept tigers in his palace, and people would go to see them. He would organise a grand feast for the officers on Dussehra. The rooms of his palace had large mirrors, and chandeliers hung from the ceiling. The Indian officers wore black achkans, while the Englishmen wore dress-suits. A group of Englishwomen stood on one side, while the group of Indian officers' wives stood on the other; the groups talked amongst themselves. The Raja's queens and maidservants gazed at the guests from behind curtains, but the guests were not allowed to see them. Whisky kept flowing for two hours, and the whole room became full of cigarette smoke and the noise of guests. After that, dinner was arranged for at 10 pm at night. Pulao, kofte, korma, roasted chicken, and fruit jelly filled the table. A band of musicians played music outside. A lot of the conversation revolved around hunting, golf, films, and servants.

When dinner was over, Akhtari Begum performed her song. Akhtari was a resident of Faizabad; she would wear black clothes and lead the procession of Muharram in the area. Then the women went to meet the queen. The Englishwomen appreciated the queen's sari and jewellery.

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The queen gave silk dupattas to all the women guests, they expressed gratitude for her gift.

Such meals organised by Talukdars added interest to the dull life of Faizabad. On some days, we would bring food from our homes and eat it together on moonlit nights on the banks of the Sarayu river. Someone would get meat, another would get urad lentil, *bhalle*, *pakora*.

Apart from this, we would get the opportunity to hunt teals in winter. There were a lot of lakes in Faizabad. When we went on tour, we would sit in boats to hunt in the lake before the sun rose. The teals would flutter their wings and fly, we would shoot at them when they flew. The soldiers of the cantonment also accompanied us on these hunts. I observed that very few of them had good aim.

My former interest in collecting algae re-emerged upon seeing those lakes, rivers, and rivulets. While the others hunted teals, I would collect algae in bottles. I sifted through all the lakes and rivers of Faizabad in pursuit of this interest, and found many new species of algae. I would sit in the veranda of my bungalow on Sunday morning, and examine the algae with a microscope. I would become so absorbed in examining them, that I would forget all sense of time. At 1 pm, Iqbal would tell me that my food was getting cold, and I would get up. I would return to inspecting them after the meal and photograph them at night. I would also dream of algae while sleeping. It was based on this work that I gained a Doctorate in Science, later.

Apart from algae, I was also interested in village improvement. I implemented the panchayat-house scheme in that zilla. I inspired the people to get panchayat-offices constructed in their villages. I got radios, books, developed seeds and farming tools kept in those offices, and popularised their use in the village. Dr. Kailash Nath Katju, the Development Minister, encouraged me in that work.

A plot of land was needed to build a panchayat-office in one of the villages. An old, ill man had a *bigha* of land at the edge of the road. I met him, and he very gladly donated his plot of land. Stephenson was the Deputy Commissioner at that time. He was on holiday, so I was performing his tasks.

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When question hour was conducted in the afternoon, an application arrived before me. It said, "Randhawa Sahib came to our village, and he forcibly got our father's thumb-print on a piece of paper." I invited that man to my retiring room and asked him why he had written that false complaint. I pulled both of his ears with force, which stunned him. He accepted that a man had misguided him. I asked the assistant to write his account again. He narrated the whole incident and accepted his fault.

Because of the Talukdari system, the villagers of Faizabad had no integrity. When we went on tour, we observed that some men would walk by idly and lazily, and when they got about 100 yards near us, they would start crying about their troubles. Their farms were also not in a good state because they were not the owners of their land. There was a lot of illiteracy in the villages. I felt that this was an area where land improvement schemes could lead to prosperity. The Talukdars were also uneducated, and they also did not extend patronage to art or literature. Their money would be spent on hosting the officers, while the rest would be spent on the song and dance of the courtesans of Lucknow.

There was a shortage of milk in the villages of Faizabad. When we went on tour, our peon would go to nearby villages to get milk. He would get even about half a litre milk in an urn with great difficulty. The houses were kutcha, and no happy faces could be seen anywhere. Sorrow lay everywhere.

When court cases begin in villages, the foundations of century-long enmities are laid down. When the 107 Criminal Procedure Code cases of the villages would come before me, I would try to get the matter sorted out in a way that the people of the village could return to harmony. Even in other cases, wherever I could see the opportunity for an agreement, I would ask the parties involved to think about the issue with cool minds and conclude it through mutual agreement. An English Deputy Commissioner was posted in Faizabad about twenty years before me. Deputy Commissioners ordinarily get appeals. That Deputy Commissioner would call all the litigants to his bungalow in the summer season and ask them to go to the roof. At 11 am, the peon would call out to them and ask those who had formed mutual agreements to come downstairs. That was how by 1 pm, a lot of the conflicting parties would find agreement amongst themselves, they would save on costs and the harmony among them would increase.

The I.C.S. week would be organised in Lucknow during the Christmas holidays in December.

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The I.C.S. officers of all the zillas would assemble. A large feast would be organised in Chhatar Manzil, all the officers and their wives would participate in it. Both of us participated in this event in December 1937. Everybody drank whisky with full enthusiasm and caused a ruckus. They threw chairs and cushions at each other. Vishwanathan had drunk a lot, he stood among the Englishmen and started shouting slogans of “Mahatma Gandhi *ki Jai!*”<sup>124</sup> English youth also participated in this game, and they also started shouting those slogans. The old and irritable Moody, Christie, and Darling kept glaring at them.

Apart from sharing feasts, this week would have exchanges of views about the problems of the zillas. The junior officers would get an opportunity to meet senior officers, and they would learn from their experience. This gave birth to brotherhood and friendship amongst the officers.

I met Dr. Birbal Sahni and his wife in Lucknow. Birbal was a well-known scientist of paleo-botany; a research institute was set up in Lucknow and named after him. His wife is the Director of that institute.

Now I will write about the famous riot of Tanda. Tanda is an industrial town with a large population of weaver-Muslims (*julaha*). I had been appointed as the S.D.O. of Tanda Tehsil. The road from Faizabad to Tanda was unmetalled. On 21 August 1938, I was staying in a house which was two miles away from Tanda. It was around 7 pm in the evening when I received news that Muslims had surrounded 15-20 Hindus at the crossing near the mosque. Those Hindus were performing devotional hymns and passing by the mosque when the Muslims attacked them. Those poor people hid in a shop out of fear. I left for the site with my Rajput bodyguard the moment I heard this news. I saw a mob of about 3000 Muslims there. I

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<sup>124</sup> *Ki Jai*: Victory of, lit., Hail the Victory of Mahatma Gandhi.



thought about how we could save those Hindus. I saw fewer people on one side, and so tried to extract the Hindus from a street near that side. By that time, the Thanedar of Tanda, who was a Shia Muslim, came to the site with two of his policemen. When those Hindus left the shop, the mob started pelting bricks and stones at them and us. One of them hit me with a lathi, it hurt my arm. A brick hit the stomach of the Tehsildar, and he fell, there and then. A young Deputy Collector named Sarin who was training under me, was with me.

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He was also hit on the shoulder with a lathi. It felt like that dangerous mob would kill us all. The Thanedar evaluated the situation and said, "This cannot be controlled without bullets." One of the soldiers pulled the trigger, the bullet hit the thigh of a rioter and he fell down. But he did not die. The moment the gunshot was heard, the entire mob started scrambling, running away. There was a pile of lathis, knives and cans full of petrol lying in the area. That proved that the rioters had come prepared.

Many rioters went inside the mosque. I asked the Muslim Thanedar to remove his shoes and go inside the mosque with fellow Muslim policemen to arrest the rioters. This way we caught 300-400 rioters and imprisoned them.

At that time, there was great tension between the Congress and Muslim League. The Muslim League leaders started accusing us of atrocities against Muslims. The next day, Stephenson, the Deputy Commissioner, also came from Faizabad. I narrated the whole incident to him, and he instantly understood that whatever had happened was correctly done. After that, only the Commissioner came and conducted an inquiry. He also reached the conclusion that the firing was valid, and that there had been no alternative.

The leaders of the Muslim League were not satisfied by these enquiries and they began saying that a judicial enquiry should be conducted over this incident. The Congress Government accepted this demand, and the Chief Court instituted Judge York to conduct the enquiry. Shri H.P. Gupta represented us as the government lawyer. He advised us and the police officers to give our testimonies without exaggeration, and to only narrate the truth. The enquiry continued for three weeks. When I had to give my testimony, the Muslim League had got its most capable lawyers from Lucknow. When I gave the testimony, they left the enquiry because there is a lot of power in truth.

The Talukdar of Pirpur, who was a big leader of the Muslim League, published a false report with senseless allegations against the officers. York's enquiry exposed the lies of the Muslim League. The result of taking action in Tanda was that riots stopped happening in U.P. This incident taught me that no matter how much danger there may be, if you are determined in your courage and retain confidence, then huge mobs can also be scared of you.

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Ordinarily, thugs are scared people, and they terrify those who are vulnerable. If you have strong will-power, you can control these culprits. If you show weakness, they will not resist

destroying you. Waris Shah has rightly said, “*Danda Peer Hai Wigdeyan-Tigdeyan Da.*”<sup>125</sup> I was greatly appreciated by the Hindus of U.P. I often saw that whenever I would be standing on the platform of a station, then Hindu women would touch my feet because I had saved a number of Hindus’ lives, and I had prevented the town of Tanda from being burnt to ashes.

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<sup>125</sup> The stick teaches lessons to wrong doers.

Chapter 16  
**Almora**  
**The Beauty of the Kumaon Mountains**  
 (1939)

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I was transferred to Almora in May 1939. This was a hill territory, and U.P.'s Chief Minister Pandit Govind Vallabh Pant, who was a resident of Kumaon, wanted an officer interested in village improvement to be appointed to the territory. That was why I was transferred to that zilla. I had heard that Nanda Devi and Trishul were two of the snow-laden high peaks of the Himalayas in that area, and Uday Shankar had set up a cultural centre in Almora.<sup>126</sup>

Engrossed in these dreams, we set off for Almora in our Chevrolet motorcar. The tyres of the car were old, and they got punctured in four places by the time we reached Bareilly. A sharp stone slashed through one tyre completely, and our car stopped three miles outside Bareilly. I got into a tonga, went to Bareilly, and bought one new tyre and a tube. Then when we set off again, a goat came under the car and died. When we were close to Bareilly, the fan-belt broke. It was summer, and we reached Bareilly in a bad state. Then we crossed the *terai* forests and reached Haldwani. Umbrella-like *paakad* trees grew on both sides of the road, their gleaming copper-coloured leaves shone in the light of the setting sun. After Haldwani, the dry region of Bhabar formed the landscape.

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We could only see lantana bushes there and nothing else. Lantana used to be planted as the ornament of gardens, but it started spreading so much that it became difficult to control. At night, one can also see lions walking near the road there. We reached Kathgodam from Haldwani where large stocks of haldu and teak logs lay; they are loaded into the trains and sent to the fields.

The ascent began from Kathgodam. After one hour, we reached Nainital. There is a large lake there, weeping willow trees grow at its banks. We stayed in Nainital for a day and met Madam Sass Brunner, a famous artist. Sass Brunner and her daughter Elizabeth were from Budapest, the capital of Hungary. They lived in Shanti Niketan near Tagore first, and then they came to Nainital. I had bought Sass Brunner's famous painting *Mahatma Buddha's Consciousness*.

We reached Ranikhet from Nainital. Ranikhet was the cantonment of the British Army and the Nanda Devi mountain could be seen from there. The Himalayan peaks which talk to the sky, give so much peace to the mind. Their purity washes away our sins. We crossed Kosi

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<sup>126</sup> Uday Shankar was a well-known dancer and choreographer of the 1920s and 1930s in India, Europe and the United States. He fused European forms, Indian classical, tribal and folk styles of dance, and theatrical techniques in his performances, and is known to have famously performed the *Radha-Krishna* ballet with the noted ballerina Anna Pavlova. He established the 'Uday Shankar India Cultural Centre' near Almora in 1938, which served as a teaching institution and as an assembly of performers from different parts of India.

after setting off from Ranikhet, and then reached Almora. The town of Almora had been set up by Raja Kalyan Singh in 1560. Simla, Nainital, Dalhousie etc. are cities established by the British, and only Almora has the unique feature of being a purely native hill station.

We took a house on rent. This house was near the D.C.'s bungalow, and it was owned by Dr. Birbal Sahni. We were told that Swami Vivekanand had lived there. It had very cold rooms and there was a clump of trees in front. I do not know how Vivekanand was comfortable there. We were not happy in that house at all. Someone like me can never find pleasure in a house, which despite being situated in the snowy mountains of the Himalayas, does not show any view of the peaks. We spent two weeks in that house and started looking for a new house. Finally, we shifted to a bungalow named Summerlies. It had small, and pretty rooms. One could clearly see the mountains from there. If a person would sit there by himself, he would become captivated by the view.

The water of Almora was bad. It had mica, which upsets the stomach. We got dysentery. This disease is called 'Hill Diarrhoea'.

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We lost our appetite and became quite weak. That was when we realised why the people of that area had sad faces. Their faces were sallow, their collar-bones prominent, faces like mangoes sucked dry.

Dharam Vir was the Deputy Commissioner of Almora. His father Jwala Prasad used to be a famous engineer in U.P., and his father-in-law Sir Ganga Ram was a famous engineer in Punjab. Dharam Vir's wife Daya was a patient of tuberculosis. Dharam Vir was a colourful personality, he had no shortage of girlfriends. He would always remain happy, and his bungalow would have people playing cards. I was not interested in that. Dharam Vir was very fond of travelling in the mountains, he had crossed the Trail-Pass of Pindari glacier and had also seen Kailash-Mansarovar in Tibet. Dharam Vir became my true friend, I can never forget his friendship.

There, the work of the courts was different from that in the plains. The work in the plains was conducted in Urdu, but there, it was conducted in Hindi. Reading my assistant's broken Hindi was difficult. I would ask him to read it to me, and I would keep looking at his face so that he would not deceive me. Only when I trusted him, would I sign the paper.

The court cases ordinarily revolved around water mills and *nautod*.<sup>127</sup> There were three or four water mills installed for one river, and a person would want to set up a new water mill while the older water mill owners would prevent him from doing so. The other cases referred to 498 IPC, when married women sometimes ran away with younger lovers. When they would present their accounts in court, they would usually say that their husbands were impotent. Only two cases of murder came before me in 6 months. I still remember one of them. A beautiful woman named Bachuli lived in a village. Her husband had gone to Bhabar for labour work. In the absence of her husband, two young men of the village started troubling her. One day, when she was returning to the village with a stack of grass on her head, the young men surrounded her and began teasing her. They would not stop despite her pleas to them, and they raped her.

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<sup>127</sup> *Nautod*: Here, it refers to married women who ran away with younger lovers.

Bachuli cried that she would inform her father-in-law about her rape. The moment she said this, one of the boys killed her by pressing her throat, strangling her. They killed her, cut her body into pieces, and buried them in the earth. The dogs of the village dug up the earth and found the corpse. After this, both the murderers were caught.

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I sent this case to the Sessions court, and both of those criminals were sentenced to death by hanging.

The people who were not satisfied with government courts, or could not pay for the expenses of litigation, would take refuge in Gol Devta. Gol Devta's temple lies in Chitai village. A man named Jeet Ram took a loan of 100 Rupees from Aan Ram. When he had to return the money, Jeet Ram refused. There was no written evidence, and no court case could be filed. Disturbed, Aan Ram went to the temple of Gol Devta, offered 1 Rupee and 25 Paise to the Devta, took a handful of rice and narrated the entire incident before the Devta. He asked for justice from the God. One month later, Jeet Ram's buffalo died. The next month, his only son fell sick. Jeet Ram believed that this was Gol Devta's punishment. He took Aan Ram along and went to Gol Devta's temple, returned the 100 Rupees, and asked for forgiveness from the God. The only thing that troubles a sinner is his sins, and if he has not become immune to his sins, the fear of gods and goddesses ordinarily makes him tread the path of righteousness. A pile of applications lay in the temple of Gol Devta.

Almora zilla's villages have Khasi Rajputs as farmers, and the working classes are called 'Shilpkar'. The Rajputs would not let the Shilpkars sit in palanquins for marriage ceremonies. They got this right after a lot of agitation. The Rajputs of the villages were honest and brave, and they often killed tigers with lathis alone. One day, 10 men brought the carcass of a tiger tied to a bamboo frame, to my bungalow. They told me that the tiger was hidden in a cave, and so they disturbed the tiger with sulphur smoke. The tiger came out and they killed it with spades and lathis. I gave them 20 Rupees as a prize from the government.

Brahmins and Baniyas live in Almora city. Brahmans include the Pant, Joshi, Pandey, and Bhat sub-castes. These people came here from Maharashtra in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, and they used to earn their livelihoods by working for the kings. By that time, they had become very advanced in the sphere of education. The Baniyas belong to the Shah gotra, and they are fair skinned. They own a number of the Englishmen's bungalows. The British set up tea gardens here in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, but these were not successful. Apart from these castes, many foreigners and especially Americans, also lived in Almora. They owned all the houses on Kalimaat Hill. Many times, I saw a white sadhu wearing saffron clothes and walking barefoot in Almora.

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When I asked him about it, he told me that he was Dutch, and his name was Sauranson. This man first came to Tagore in Shanti Niketan and worked as gardener; sometime later, he became a sadhu and began living in a cave in Almora. He was a peace-loving man with good thoughts, and I also met him later in Delhi and Chandigarh. He would never ask for anything. If you offered him food, he would eat it, but he would never ask for it.

Two women also lived on Kalimaat, Mrs. Penrose and Mrs. Staterheim. They also escaped from the rat race of Europe to live a life of peace and quiet here.

Two of these foreigners greatly impacted me. One of them was Major Alexander, while Professor Nicholson was the other one. They had embraced Vaishnavism and had taken on Hindu names. They used to live in Mayadevi Ashram, Panwa Naula, and wore saffron dhotis and shirts. Nicholson was named Shri Krishan Prem. He had translated the *Kath Upanishad* into English; the translation was published in Allahabad. Before becoming sadhus, Alexander used to be a doctor in the Indian Medical Service and Professor Nicholson was the Professor of English Literature at Allahabad University.

The people of Kumaon forget the difficulties and hard work of their tough lives by singing and dancing. The folk songs of the Bhotiyaan people of Darma are very pleasing. The men go to Tibet for trade and leave the women at home. These villages have women's clubs named 'Rang-Bang'. Unmarried girls are members of Rang-Bang. They go to a high place, hold the edges of white sheets, and sway the cloth in the wind. The unmarried men of the area see this signal and come to them. In Rang-Bang, they sit around bonfires, drink *lugdi* and sing. The girls' group sings first, and then the boys' group responds in song.

It is also very lively when they transplant the paddy saplings. The drum beater sings the first line and then beats the drum; the women respond to his beginning and plant the saplings.

We were quite bored of the loneliness of Almora by September and decided that we should visit Pindari glacier. There were 40 coolies with us; they were carrying official documents, our bedding, utensils and clothes, and flour and lentils. We made our two children Surinder and Amrit sit in a hiking carrier.

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We kept a battery-operated radio in the second carrier. We met our artist friend Brewster and his wife Aksha on the way. They were Americans who had come to India in search of peace, and they had begun living in Almora. Mrs. Brewster was paralysed, and she could not walk. Her husband would bathe and dress her. She would look like the goddess of peace while she was seated. I still have Brewster's Mahatma Buddha painting; it decorates my bed-study. Mahatma Buddha sits cross-legged on the peak of a mountain, there are blue mountains behind him and two pink lotus flowers in a lake in front. This painting gives me a lot of peace and reminds me of that unique couple.

We walked for a few miles and reached Binsar. The pine forests echoed with the *pi-kahaan, pi-kahaan* of the hawk-cuckoo. We stayed in Lala Harkrishan Lal Gangola's bungalow in Binsar. This bungalow had been built by Sir Henry Ramsay in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Ramsay was the first Commissioner of Kumaon. He was a kind officer and was well-loved by the people here. Kumaon's people would call him 'Hari Ram ji'.

We reached Gananath the next day and went to the temple there. There is a waterfall here, and a shivlinga lies under it. I found an alga from a cave, I named it *Syrocladium*. I was very proud of that discovery. I realised that if nothing else, my name would be immortalised in the field of botany with that discovery.

Feeling happy about that discovery, we crossed Devaldhar and reached Bagheshar. We stayed in a government bungalow which was at the confluence of the Gomti and Saryu rivers.

After reaching there, we gave soap to the coolies so that they could clean themselves of the dust of the journey. After they bathed, we offered jalebis to all of them.

We reached Kapkot the next day. The bungalow here is on the banks of the Saryu, and there is a peepal tree here which is said to be 300 years old. A wedding procession of Pahari people came in the evening, and they rested under that tree. One boy beat the drum while the others danced with swords in their hands.

The next morning, we reached Lohar Khet. We bought mountain cucumbers on the way and ate them with a chutney of green chillies. In the evening, we saw a group of Pahari people carrying torches of pine wood coming our way. Ratan Singh, the Patwari, had invited them for our entertainment. They held each other's arms to stand in a circle and began singing folk songs for us.

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These folk songs express the love legend of Rasula and Malushahi. Rasula was a beautiful Sampat Bhotiyaan girl, and Malushahi was the son of the king of Dwarhat. They saw each other in a dream and fell in love. They got married after a lot of difficulties.

We set off at 7 am the next morning. We climbed the 8600 feet high slope of Dhakdi and reached the bungalow. A very beautiful view of the Himalayas can be seen from here. One can see the snow-laden mountains of Nanda Devi from Trisul. After the climb, the coolies asked for a sheep to sacrifice to Nanda Devi. We bought a sheep for 7 Rupees, and they cooked korma out of the sheep for their dinner. They relished it along with lugdi.

The path from Dhakdi to Khati is on a descent. We saw a number of snakes on the way. I had a twisted lathi which I killed seven or eight snakes with; I threw them into the Pindari river. Khati is the last village and there is no habitation after it. The next day, we reached the Pindari glacier. The bungalow's roof had caved in due to the weight of the snow, and we passed the night in a temporary shelter. We heated the water and made tea, but this drink tasted like violet-tea. We were at a height of 11,000 feet and so the water boiled slowly, it would not heat as much as it does in the plains. We heard the sound of bells at around 10 am and saw two mountain dogs roaming around. We came to know that shepherds were resting in the caves nearby.

Pindari glacier is a river of ice. The place where the glacier melts is called the snout of the glacier. The glacier has large wells of ice. Rocks keep falling in them with a terrible loud sound. The Pahari people say that this is the sound of Lord Shiva's two-headed drum (*damru*).

There are no trees on the mountains at the height of 11,000 feet. Himalayan birch trees constitute the last level of trees at 10,000 feet; our ancestors used to write on their white bark because paper had not reached India then. One can find alpine flowers here, like gentian, potentilla, and blue poppies. The blue poppies are the prettiest.

We savoured the beauty of the snow-covered mountains and drank in the loveliness of alpine flowers for some time, after which we returned to Almora. This journey to Pindari glacier is an unforgettable memory for me. If I had not gone on this journey, Almora would have continued to prick my mind like a thorn. We barely spent 6 months in Almora, but those 6 months felt like 6 years.

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I tried very hard to get transferred from Almora. I got information in October that I was being appointed as the Additional Collector of Allahabad. We breathed a sigh of relief and thanked God for this transfer. Iqbal quickly packed our luggage so that we could leave that place as fast as possible. Many cities and areas look good from afar, or only for some time. We understood that the mountains are good for travel and tourism, but not for postings.



Chapter 17  
**Allahabad and Agra**  
(1939-1940)

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Leaving Almora felt like a bird leaving its cage. If you have to live there for long, the mountains feel like prisons in comparison with the plains. We felt elated when we reached Kathgodam and breathed in the free spaces of the plains. Perhaps, no other journey by motorcar gave us as much joy as the journey from Almora to Allahabad did.

In Allahabad, our house was near Edward Park. This was a large bungalow and there was a lawn and garden behind it. There were two rooms on the side of the veranda. I converted one of those rooms into my laboratory. I carefully kept a camera for micro-photography in this, apart from other relevant things and the bottles of algae that I had found in Almora.

The Civil Lines of Allahabad are clean. The houses have tiled roofs and avenues of tamarind trees run along the roads. Civil Lines was the home of U.P.'s famous lawyers. Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, Dr. Kailash Nath Katju, Sir Shafaat Ahmad Khan, Shri Pathak, are some names of lawyers living in Civil Lines whose names must be mentioned. Allahabad is a city of lawyers in the real sense. This has Motilal Nehru's house 'Anand Bhavan' where Jawahar Lal Nehru, his sister Vijaylakshmi Pandit and her husband Ranjit S. Pandit live.

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Anand Bhavan has two large buildings, one old and the other new. The older house which Motilal Nehru got constructed is neglected and unsystematically built. The new house has two floors, the flooring of its rooms and verandas is made of grey mosaic cement. Many visitors who come from the villages to meet Jawaharlal Nehru show their respects by touching the floor with their hands. Vijaylakshmi Pandit has decorated this house with paintings. If this house is compared with the new buildings being constructed today, then this house would also be called unsystematic. It is good that Jawaharlal Nehru has donated this Bhavan to the community. If I had owned those Bhavans I would have done the same.

I took great interest in village improvement in this zilla as well. I was the Secretary of the Zilla Village Improvement Committee, and R.S. Pandit was its President. Ranjit Pandit was a resident of Gujarat and he was a good scholar and writer. He translated the *Rajtarangini* into English. He also translated Kalidasa's drama *Ritusamhar* into English; this translation is very well done.

World War II began, and the Congress Ministry resigned. Those people who followed Congress Ministers like flies on jaggery, would not even go to meet them out of fear. The whole work of village improvement lost its initial steam and became bogus.<sup>128</sup> I remember that the Governor of U.P., Sir Maurice Halt came for a tour of Allahabad, and one village was chosen for him to be shown. A Muslim Deputy Collector who was responsible for this arrangement,

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<sup>128</sup> Randhawa intersperses Punjabi with a few English words, like 'bogus' in this case. Care has been taken to retain them in the translation.

got swings attached to the neem trees in the village. He had a garden dug; mango trees were planted in it. When the Governor came to the village, the farmers loaded him with garlands of flowers. He saw women wearing new clothes swinging from trees. Bore-hole latrines were made on one side of the village. When the Governor asked if anyone used them, a villager said that the guard did not let anyone come near them. This kind of bogus village improvement can be seen in independent India till date. When a Minister or big officer goes to a village, the streets are cleaned for show, the officials are loaded with so many garlands that they cannot even talk properly to anyone.

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The Yamuna flows through two Tehsils in Allahabad zilla, and the Ganga flows through two other Tehsils. The people of the Tehsils where the Ganga flows are healthy. The people of the Tehsils where the Yamuna flows look weak and ill. The water of the Ganga does not rot. This was why the Mughal Emperors would get the water of the Ganga brought to them to drink. The Ganga has bacteriophages which eat harmful bacteria.

Once when I was camping in the forests of Mejha Tehsil, a lion started roaring in the evening. Chaos spread in the whole forest. The monkeys were most anxious, they jumped onto the trees and began shrieking. The birds also started making noise. I quietly stood up with my peon and observed this scene. If someone says that he is not afraid of the lion's roar in the forest, he is lying. The people of the nearby village were going about their work as if they had no worries. I was surprised by their courage.

It was common to have communal riots among the Hindus and Muslims of Allahabad during the festivals of Holi and Muharram. I would ride my horse and take the police along to manage these situations. I learned that horses and small rods are useful for controlling rioting mobs. When 20-25 horse-riders rode their horses towards the crowd, the crowd would disperse out of fear.

Tutan Khan was the most dangerous thug of Allahabad. His head was like the mosaic of a broken china utensil. The police were very scared of him. He was arrested many times, but when he would appear before D.N. Mullah, the judge, the judge would release him out of fear for his life. Sham Sundar Nath Agha, the Deputy Superintendent of the city, was very smart, but he was also afraid of Tutan Khan. I observed this situation and told Agha that I would catch Tutan Khan and his accomplices myself. I took 12 soldiers and went to Tutan Khan's house. I saw that Tutan Khan and his followers were grinding opium. The very moment I went inside, I hit Tutan Khan on the head with a stick. The police officers attacked the thugs and captured them. When we searched the house, we found revolvers, pistols, cartridges, and bags of gold jewellery hidden in the tiled roof. Catching Tutan Khan and his thugs led to a lot of peace in the city.

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Once, a man came to me and he informed me that there was a cocaine smuggler in the city whom he could help me catch. I rented a tonga and wore a black achkan and churidar pants. The informer introduced me to the smuggler, and the smuggler sat with me in the tonga. I kept

talking to him for a long time and he began believing that I was from a royal family in Nepal, and that I wanted to buy cocaine from him. By that time, as per our plan, a group of police officials arrived and arrested the smuggler with cocaine, red-handed.

The war had become tense, and news of the defeat of the British kept coming from all directions. The Commissioner of Allahabad was an old, hard-hearted Englishman named W.C. Dywell.<sup>129</sup> He was a stubborn Englishman and he hated Indian officers. People used to call him 'Devil Sahib Bahadur'. G.W.M. Whittle<sup>130</sup> was the Collector of the zilla. He was happy-go-lucky and kind. A 'war fund' meeting was organised where a Muslim Deputy Collector suggested that the money of the panchayats should also be added to the war fund. This was not a lot of money and even if all of it were added, not even an airplane could have been bought from it. The small, broken bridges of the villages were repaired with these funds. I opposed this suggestion and said that no big difference would be made to the war effort with this money, but it would lead to a lot of problems for the village people if funds were thus diverted.

After this incident, and because Congress leaders would often meet me, the British Government transferred me to Agra. It had only been eleven months since I had been in Allahabad, and I also understood why I was being transferred. When we journeyed from Allahabad to Agra on 30 October 1940, we felt that we were being pushed out of the heaven of Allahabad. Agra is the hottest place in the United Provinces. We faced the problem of finding a place to live in, the moment we reached there. We took a house in a new colony named 'Eidgah'. There was dust all around, and we felt like we had reached hell. Sometime later, we found a clean house near Hewitt Park and we felt a little bit at peace.

Sahibzada Khurshid Ahmad was the Collector of Agra. He was from the family of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, and he was very fond of drinking whisky.

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He was ordinarily happy-go-lucky. L.D. Wood was the Commissioner of Agra. He was anxious about the War like the other Englishmen. He was also fond of doing yoga. One morning, he slipped on the floor of the washroom and fractured his leg. This was why he had to take leave and Khurshid Ahmad became the Commissioner in his place, while I was appointed as the Collector. The sorrow I had felt upon becoming Joint Magistrate from Additional Magistrate, Allahabad, dissipated this way.

Two I.C.S. officers, Kishan Chand and Johnson, were training under me. I preferred Kishan Chand, and took him along during my tours. One day, we rode to Hewitt Park. Both the horses began cantering fast, and soon became uncontrollable. Fortunately, Kishan Chand fell off his horse and my horse also stopped. I pulled Kishan Chand up and checked if he was alright. Then I took him home, gave him brandy, and made him stand on his feet. Kishan Chand and his wife Sita used to live with us in the Collector's bungalow, they also shared meals with us, but we did not take any compensation from them for that.

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<sup>129</sup> As transliterated.

<sup>130</sup> As per the list of King George VI's New Year Honours of 1946, George William Murdoch Whittle was an Indian Civil Service Officer who was appointed as Deputy Secretary to the Government of India in the Department of Supply, Branch Secretariat (Iron & Steel Control), Calcutta.

I started working for village improvement in Agra as well. Raja Kushalpal Singh greatly supported me in this work. Raja Kushalpal Singh was a reed-thin man, he would only eat one chapatti with yellow lentil. But when he would organise feasts, every plate would have fifteen bowls which would have lentils, cumin potatoes, meat, and seasonal vegetables. Their sweet tomato chutney was particularly special.

We occasionally went to Dayal Bagh.<sup>131</sup> This sect had two groups; Mehta Charan Singh was the leader of one group; he was a retired Chief Engineer from Punjab. This group used to advocate for small handicrafts; their followers were of a higher moral status. Sahib Ji Maharaj was the guru of the other group. This group was constructing a gurdwara in competition with the Taj Mahal. I believe that Dayal Bagh's devotees, the Radha Soamis, are kind and principled people.

Kamla Rathore was a Congress leader from Agra. Five years previously, she had defeated the Editor of the *Leader* newspaper C.Y. Chintamani in the Assembly elections. Chintamani believed that he was a famous man and so he did not need to tour the villages of Agra.

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Kamla Rathore's workers spread word that Chintamani Bai is a courtesan in Agra, and so the voters should decide if they wanted to vote for a courtesan or for Shrimati Kamla Rathore.

The British Government had arrested the Congress leaders. Many famous Congress leaders were imprisoned in Agra jail. Ordinarily, the jail officers would shut them in their cells at around 8 or 9 pm at night. As I have mentioned before, Agra is an extremely hot area, and so the practice developed by the jail staff was appropriate. Colonel Bhandari was instituted as the new Superintendent of Agra jail. He would follow rules by the book, and so he started making the prisoners return to their cells the moment the sun set. The prisoners protested. I advised Bhandari to do what the former Superintendent used to do. Bhandari ji replied that he should be given this order in writing. I refused. Bhandari said that he had decided to forcibly shut the prisoners in their cells and so he requested 100 policemen for the task. Parson was the S.P. of Agra. I ordered him to reach the jail with 100 constables. The policemen started pushing the prisoners into their cells by gripping their arms and legs. This lasted until around 10 pm at night. I thought that injustice had been meted out to the prisoners; they had not been given food and they must have been starving. When I went inside the barrack of the prisoners, one prisoner threw the used water of their cell's common utensil at me. I said, "You are Gandhi ji's follower, but violence has not left you. It is within my authority to punish you, but I do not want to punish anyone. The one who has thrown the water should come forward and apologise." Hearing this, pin drop silence descended over the prisoners, and they began looking at one another. I returned home, and the next morning, I received an envelope. The post had a piece of paper inside which said, 'All of us apologise to you'. They also wrote the name of the culprit, but I did not punish anyone. The next day, when I went to inspect the jail again, the prisoners presented the culprit

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<sup>131</sup> Dayal Bagh was the centre for the Radhasoami Satsang Sabha, a faith derived from spiritual tenets held by different religions. It is located in Agra, and functions as a spiritual sect till date.

before me. Everybody sought my forgiveness again. I was happy with this moral victory. Many of those prisoners also met me later, we recalled that incident and laughed a lot.

When Agra is mentioned, one cannot forget Taj Mahal and Fatehpur Sikri. I preferred Fatehpur Sikri over Taj Mahal. One day, we spread carpets under the umbrellas of Panch Mahal and re-constructed the scene which was perhaps common in Akbar's reign.

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Everybody greatly enjoyed the music, dance and banquet which were organised there.

In those days, Hitler attacked Russia. All the experts estimated that the Germans had lost their minds, and their defeat was now not very distant.

Even though the War continued, the British Government had the policy of giving rest and rejuvenation to the high-level officers working hard in the zillas. Unlike today's government, they did not believe that all possible functions and output should be extracted out of officers. We took a holiday of 1 month and 27 days from 18 July 1941. We spent this vacation in Kashmir. We also visited the Amarnath Caves and Kolahoi glacier. The journey to Amarnath was interesting. I saw the lake of Sheshnag on the way and collected algae from it.<sup>132</sup> We saw the skeletons of horses and mules at Panjtarni and came to know that there were some poisonous herbs there which had killed animals who ate them. I also saw some wild pigeons in the Amarnath Caves, it is believed that they are Lord Shiva's blessed birds.

We set up a tent on the banks of the river in Pahalgam after our return journey from Amarnath. Sometimes, natural, and human scenes also get mixed up. I was sitting on the banks of the river and gazing at the deodar forests. I saw that a fat woman was washing clothes on a big rock in front of the forest. One hour later, a man came to me and asked me why I was looking at his wife. I replied that my wife was with me, and she was more beautiful than that fat woman, so I did not need to look at the latter. Iqbal was sitting nearby. I told him that if he was still suspicious, he could see my wife and ascertain for himself. Even after saying this, that man, who was a Professor of Sanatan Dharam College, Lahore, was not satisfied. He started arguing. I complained about him to the Tourist Officer of Pahalgam. He tried to explain to that man that he should ask his wife to look for some other place to wash her clothes at. That crazy man's obduracy spoiled our experience.

We got news in September that I had been posted as the Deputy Commissioner of Rae Bareilly. We returned to Gojra on 10 September; we lost all our utensils on the way because of our hurry. We reached Rae Bareilly on 14 September 1941.

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<sup>132</sup> The Sheshnag Lake on the way to Amarnath is where Lord Shiva is said to have released his snakes.

## Chapter 18

### **The Talukdars of Rae Bareilly**

(P. 140)

Rae Bareilly is a small town which is 50 miles away from Lucknow. It has a population of 20,000 people. There is no electricity or tap-water, and it has unmetalled roads. Rae Bareilly's importance was limited to it being the headquarter of the zilla.

The condition of Rae Bareilly's villages was extremely poor. The Talukdars were the owners of the land; some owned 100 villages, others had 200 villages, still others had 300 villages. Khazurgaon's Talukdar, Raja Umanath Bakhsh Singh was the most interesting among them. He would give 1,50,000 Rupees as annual rent to the government. Tiloi's Talukdar Raja Bishan Nath Sharan Singh was the biggest Talukdar there, he gave 1,70,000 Rupees as annual revenue to the government. There were two or three other Talukdars apart from them who had this status. Raja Krishan Pal Singh of Kurri Sadhauri, and Raja Barkhandi Mahesh Pratap Narayan Singh of Shivgarh. There were many other small and big Talukdars apart from them.

Rae Bareilly also had two Sikh families; Sardar Amar Singh and Beerpal Singh were the heads of those households. Their father, who is remembered as a prince, was the grandson of Maharaja Ranjit Singh and had been deported from Punjab. He had brilliant aim. His servant would throw an 8-anna coin in the air, and he would hit it with a bullet from his rifle. The prince was very fat. The English Deputy Commissioner of the zilla advised him to exercise, but nothing would affect the prince. He kept swelling up day after day; he could not even tie the knot of his pants by himself.

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Once, the Deputy Commissioner said, "Sardar ji, the biggest service I can perform for you is that I can send you to jail for 6 months so you can grind grains there."

The biggest job of the Rae Bareilly Deputy Commissioner was to listen to the complaints of the Talukdars and their queens. They had all humanly possible flaws because they remained idle. No Talukdar would wake up before 10 am. They would have their meals and then keep chewing paan like goats, the whole day. They would always keep a servant along; the servant would keep more paan in a silver box and offer the paan to the Raja sahib from time to time. They also had the habit of chewing tobacco, and so their teeth were always dirty.

The Talukdars also considered litigation a special hobby. Not only did they file legal cases against their tenants; but when they saw that someone else also faced a property dispute but did not have the money to fight the case, they would fight the case for that party. The deal would go thus: if the Talukdars won the case, they would get half the party's property.

Many Talukdars would marry in Nepal. The Talukdar of Tiloi had married a beautiful Nepali woman, she was very fashionable. She would wear blue goggles whenever she came to meet us. The Talukdar was illiterate, and she was educated in a convent-school, she could also speak English. She usually lived in Lucknow. The Talukdar of Tiloi also married an illiterate

daughter of Thakurs. When he met me after the marriage, he told me that he was happier now because both of them had the same cultural level.<sup>133</sup>

All the flaws that Havelock Ellis has mentioned in his books can be found in the Talukdars of Rae Bareilly. Some of them were fond of young boys, and some of prostitutes. A lot of the extra money of the Talukdars would fall into the hands of the courtesans of Lucknow. The Talukdar youth would start experimenting on young servant-women from a young age. They would also seek training from the courtesans of Lucknow for civilised etiquette.

Some of the villages of Rae Bareilly had been gifted by Hindu Talukdars to their Muslim courtesans. They would rear their children as Muslims.

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One day, a man named Muhammad Hussain Khan came to meet me. He wore a green turban, had light-coloured eyes, and his beard was dyed black. He told me that he was the brother of Raja Ranbahadur Singh, the Talukdar of Pehremau. The moment he told me this, I instantly understood their relationship. Muhammad Hussain Khan was also a courtier of Raja Ranbahadur Singh. The Raja was fond of Urdu *shayari*, and whenever he would perform a couplet, Muhammad Hussain Khan would sit before him and loudly exclaim, “Wah, Wah!” When he would finish his shayari, Muhammad Hussain Khan would present paan and cigarettes to him.

There were some widowed *Talukdarnis* in Rae Bareilly. I was camping on the banks of the Ganga in Dalmau. The orderly named Nizami informed me that Thakurain Baisan Kanwar had come to meet me. The Thakurain was sitting in a chariot. There was an elephant behind her which was mounted by her manager and her adopted son. A soldier wearing an army uniform was standing near the chariot with a spear in his hand. There was a train of six servants behind them holding bronze plates containing raisins, almonds, pistachios, walnuts, tomatoes, and cauliflowers, covered with cloth. Because it was wartime, the Thakurain had brought a ‘recruit’ and 100 Rupees as donation for the war effort.<sup>134</sup> Her adopted son held a silver plate which had paan, betel-nut, cardamom and 5 Rupees as gifts in it. I took a piece of cardamom, touched the money, and returned everything to him. After talking to the Rani, I came to know that she wakes up early every morning and prays till 9 am. She sits behind the purdah at 10 am, her manager sits on the other side of the purdah and presents applications and letters to her. He advises her on issues and takes her orders. She has a meal at 11, and then sleeps for 4 hours. She walks in the veranda of her house at 6 pm in the evening, and three to four widows whom she supports financially, walk behind her. She has dinner at 11 pm and remains awake till midnight. The Rani had just left when a Congress worker came to me with an application against her. The application said that she had forcibly removed the produce of a tenant named Prabhu, forcibly taken tribute from a woman, gotten a tenant named Kalidaman Singh’s wheat crop set fire to, and had him tied with ropes and brought to her haveli in the afternoon.

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<sup>133</sup> As mentioned before, ‘cultural level’ is the term used in English by Randhawa.

<sup>134</sup> By ‘recruit’, Randhawa implies that she brought a soldier as a recruit for the war effort, along with her.

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The Talukdars' palaces reminded one of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, their drawing rooms were full of tiger-skins. The heads of sambhar deer would be hung in the verandas, dirty chandeliers hung from the roofs, the shelves would have different types of clocks and toys made of china, the sofas would belong to the Victorian period, and upon being asked the Raja would say: I bought these from some English Commissioner when he retired.

When a Talukdar wanted to buy a motorcar, he would collect tax from his tenants. This tax was named 'motorana'. When they wanted to buy an elephant, they would levy taxes called 'hathyawan'. When the English officer was on tour, the Talukdars would organise feasts for him and his officers, they would collect the money for it from their tenants. This tax was called 'latyawan' and every tenant had to give 2 Rupees for it.<sup>135</sup>

Awadh's Talukdars were pure leeches. They contributed nothing to their village societies apart from sucking the blood of their tenants. They were not interested in agriculture, reading, and studying, or in art. There was only one household in Partapgarh zilla which was different from the other Talukdars — this was the household of the Kaala Kankars. From among them, Dinesh Singh became the Foreign Affairs Minister, Suresh Singh was interested in studying birds and he also wrote a book on this topic, Brijesh became a member of the Communist Party. This is the same Brijesh who married Stalin's daughter Svetlana.<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> *Latyawan*: where *Lat* is a variation of 'Lord', lit., tax collected for the Lord.

<sup>136</sup> Josef Stalin did have a daughter named Svetlana but a basic internet search did not reveal an Indian-born spouse or partner. However, this is what is in the text.



## Chapter 19

### **The Interests, Hobbies, and Tours of the Deputy Commissioner of Rae Bareilly**

(P. 144)

Rae Bareilly was a dull town. All the officers knew more about each other than was needed. This issue had its advantages and problems. The positive aspect of this situation was that the do-gooders of the city and us considered ourselves a family, and we would participate in each other's joys and sorrows. When our buffalo, which used to give us 20 litres of milk, died, then many gentlefolk of the city came to express their sympathies. The danger was that even if one person were cunning, he would spoil the entire atmosphere. This was why the Deputy Commissioner had to talk with a lot of wisdom and care, because whatever he said would spread all over the city.

In order to keep the officers in line, I would keep them busy in different jobs, because idle officers plot adverse schemes. This was why our work for village improvement shone greatly, and many panchayat offices and schools were set up with the participation of the people.

I took a break from official work on every Sunday and on holidays, to write something in English. In those days, I developed interest in viewing flowering trees. Every bungalow in Civil Lines had flowering trees planted by the English officers. I got all these notes published in a book called *Beautifying India*.

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Every monsoon, I celebrated a tree-planting week in Rae Bareilly. I would get flowers and fruit-trees planted in courts, Tehsil offices and schools. If someone goes to Rae Bareilly even today, then they can see the gulmohar, jacaranda and orchid trees which I had had planted in 1942. They continue to beautify the city and villages of Rae Bareilly.

Malik Muhammad Jayasi, who wrote *Padmavat*, was a resident of Jayas. His name is still taken with respect in the field of Hindi literature. I got a memorial built at his birthplace, which the Muslims greatly appreciated. Mahavir Prasad Dwivedi was also from Rae Bareilly. Dwivedi is well known in Hindi literature, and he is considered the 'Father of Hindi prose'. He was also the Sarpanch of his village, but the village people greatly opposed him. He had the habit of writing on any piece of paper he came across, whether it was a newspaper or a school copy. I collected his handwritten works and preserved them in the library of Rae Bareilly.

I also contributed a lot to science, while living there. There was a room in the bungalow which I converted into my laboratory. This room was used by Dr. S.S. Nehru before me. He was fond of electroculture. He was watering some maize plants with electrified water. He had to go on holiday for some important work, and so he appointed Afzan Ullah, the Tehsildar, to look after the maize plants in his absence asking him to keep watering them with electrified water. When two days were left before Nehru returned, Afzan Ullah saw that stray cows had eaten the maize plants at night. The Tehsildar was worried, but he was a smart man. He got maize plants plucked from a farmer's field, they were two to three feet taller than Nehru's plants. When Nehru returned and saw that the plants had grown so much in 14 days, he was

surprised. The Tehsildar replied, “*Janaab*, in your absence, I measured all of them every day, and tied a thread on each one of them to see the growth. The electricity put in some effort, some force was exerted by your conviction, and so they grew so much so fast.”<sup>137</sup>

The Deputy Commissioner ordinarily listens to the appeals and decisions of Tehsildars and ADCs. Apart from this, during question hour, some interesting applications also come to the office.

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At around 12 noon, the peon calls out loudly, “This is the Question Hour of *Janaab* Deputy Commissioner Sahib Bahadur. Those who want to send applications can do so now.” I recall that an application was presented by the Harijans of the village, it said, “The high caste people make our women play with colours during the days of Holi; this means that they make our women leave our houses and stand in the middle of their groups. Then they abuse them obscenely and molest them. We untouchables have been tolerating this, but now our humanity does not allow us to see our women being insulted with obscene language and molestation. This is why we request *Huzoor* that he order the police station of every area that the Station Officers instruct their constables to announce in their villages that the high caste people should completely stop such behaviour, because we untouchables will not tolerate these terrible customs any longer; they play colours with us but call us untouchable. We will be very grateful to *Huzoor*.” This proved that the Harijans were becoming aware, and the facts that they considered acceptable a few years ago were now troubling them.

A special type of application was often presented, these were called ‘*Aamlana*’, ‘*Dadrasi*’, and ‘*Itelaahi*’. These were typically filed by the women of the lower castes like the Ahirs, the oil pressers, and Lodh etc. Their subject matter was this:

“*Janaab*, I, Sayla, the applicant present the request that I was married to Bishan Nath. Sayla was underage when she was married. Six years later, I, Sayla, came to the groom’s house. I, Sayla, went to my husband’s house many times, but he would start beating me up after two to three days and throw me out of the house. He did not give food or clothing to Sayla. Sayla lived with her father and tried to survive. Sayla’s father is old and is unable to look after her. Sayla is a young woman, she has a long life left before her. Living without a man is very difficult, these are bad times. Sayla wants to marry a second time into her clan, and she will marry. Sayla knows that you, who are forward-thinking like Sayla, should be informed about this. I request that this application be registered in your records, so that I can use the document when needed.”<sup>138</sup>

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<sup>137</sup> Verbatim.

<sup>138</sup> This entire application has been quoted verbatim in flourishing Urdu (Gurmukhi script) by Randhawa. The language is legal in nature, and refers to the applicant in third person while she is talking about herself.

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The applicant, Ganga Dayi of the oil-presser clan, said in her application that her husband Binda Deen had been lost for the past 7 years and so she wanted to re-marry.

The applicant, Ram Razia of the Lodh clan said in her application that she had been married for 16-17 years; she was married when she was a minor. Her husband unfairly took another woman and left. She earned her livelihood through labour. Because she was still young and was anxious that her honour might be violated by someone, she asked for permission to re-marry.

Such applications would only be presented. No action would be taken on them, we would only write 'Noted. Record in the file'.

The Deputy Commissioner of Rae Bareilly also had to supervise the staff of the Court of Wards. A Zilladar reported that his clerk was corrupt, and he calls prostitutes over. The clerk named Murtaza Masih was called for questioning. He replied to the Zilladar's allegations by saying, "On the evening of 27 June 1942, Huzoor was returning to Chhatwa after a leisure trip. Huzoor asked me if there was a singer there. Accordingly, I called a male singer and a courtesan. The male singer who I have explained about already, had come in the day. Huzoor also asked me whether the singer was a man or a woman. I replied that the singer was a man and not a woman. As per the command, this man started singing. Because of the rains in the zilla, the singer began singing 1.5 yards from the Huzoor, who was lying on a cot. The courtesan was not expected to come, but she came at 10 pm. I also told her to go there just to make sure if Huzoor wanted to listen to her song, and only then would she sing. Else, Huzoor could refuse her performance. That is why she also came before Huzoor, sat there, and began singing. When they came to ask for their payment in the morning, we came to know that the music continued till 3 am in the night. I had only arranged for these performances for Huzoor's pleasure.

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I also lost 2 Rupees in the bargain, but Huzoor got angry in the morning about the courtesan being called. If the courtesan entered the government building and the building lost respect, and the Huzoor was dishonoured, then the same can be said of the man's singing. This woman also sang as per the Huzoor's wishes. If Huzoor had asked her to leave, she would have obeyed, and she would also not be allowed to stay there for one more minute if she had been refused. The reality has been revealed, the rest is your decision."

Many policies would be devised to add to the war fund. The Talukdar of Khajur village wanted to get the title of C.I.E.; he donated 50,000 Rupees as donation for this title. I quietly thought how about stupid he was, but I could not say it. We organised music, dance, and poetry performances for the purpose of the war fund; Rae Bareilly became lively.

In April-May 1944, a *sanyasi* named Ram Lakhan Das came to Rae Bareilly from Rishikesh. At 7:30 am on 13 April 1944, he was pressed into a pit. He sat in the pit cross-legged, and wooden slats were placed on the pit. Sand was poured over the slats, then bricks were placed over them and joined with cement. The pit was opened at 8 am the next morning. Ram Lakhan Das was deep in meditation, and eight men pulled him out of the pit in that state. A slab of ice was kept on his head, and he slowly came into consciousness. The Civil Surgeon

examined him and found that his heartbeat was slow. Hundreds of people came to see the *swami*.

Many false letters would also come to our office during those times of war. One letter came, saying, “Baba Abdul Sammad Sahib lives in the jurisdiction of the Mauza Bhikhipur police station, Mohan Ganj, he says that Britannia will run away. They have been swept away; they can definitely not stay.” This letter had come for the Commissioner of Lucknow, Mr. Bishop; he marked it and forwarded it to me. I read it and kept it in our office.

I was camping on the banks of the Ganga in Dalmau. It was wintertime and we were burning firewood in a metal brazier for our warmth. I kept reading for two hours after having a meal, and the orderly Ram Aasre was pressing my legs. I asked him to pour water on the burning wood before he left. I was tired, and so I dozed off. I woke up at midnight.

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I saw that the canopy of the tent was on fire. I pulled the burning canopy and threw it away. I saw that the sentry who was on duty was sleeping on one side. If I had become had panicked, I would not have been able to save my life. I scolded Ram Aasre, but I did not punish him.

I saw many interesting sights while touring the villages. I saw a neem tree on a road near Kidarwapur village; water was dripping and bubbling from its trunk. When I asked the village people, they told me that the neem tree was crying. It was feeling upset for the English because the War was going on. Pigs and squirrels would drink its water, and it is also said that acne and blisters were also healed by that water.

I was happy while touring this Zilla in winter. Once, I was camping in a mango orchard in Khajur village. The Ganga flows near this village. It was night-time, and some men were sitting in a boat. They were making lit earthen lamps float in the water. The glow of the lamps created beautiful reflections and patterns in the water. Many lamps had bright flames, while others had muted light. But, eventually, all the lamps vanished in the waves of the Ganga. Man’s life is also like this.

Chapter 20**Conflict between English and Indian Officers**

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Mahatma Gandhi led the Quit India struggle in August 1942. The U.P. Government ordered us to arrest all Congress leaders. Two lists of their names were sent to the Zilla offices. The A-List had those names which we compulsorily had to arrest. B-List had the names of those leaders who the Deputy Commissioner had the discretion to arrest or not. Because the Congress leaders used to cooperate with me, I did not arrest many of them even though their names were on the list. Even those who were arrested would be treated well in prison. The Talukdar of Semri was fond of whisky; whisky continued being supplied to him in jail as well.

Many scams also happened in those days. The English believed that 1857 had returned, and their lives would be safe only if the protestors were treated strictly. The Tehsildar of Bhadri, Bajrang Bahadur Singh was travelling via train, and he was wearing a Gandhi cap. An English A.S.P. entered that train and he asked the Raja to remove his cap. The Raja refused, and also asked the five servants accompanying him to wear their Gandhi caps. The A.S.P. arrested one of the servants; the servant was presented before me. I observed that there was no law which forbade the wearing of Gandhi caps, and I released him.

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The next day, the Thanedar of Bachhrawan arrested Pandit Shiv Shankar Tripathi, who was a renowned lawyer and also held the position of the Chairman of the District Board, and presented him before me. I came to know that Tripathi was accompanying the Rani of Sameri in a car, and a Congress flag was fixed on his car. Some English army officers were passing by, they stopped his car, and handed him over to the Thanedar. I released Tripathi and advised him that he should not act brave enough to fix the flag on his car while the atmosphere was tense.

Where big leaders and rich men became terrified, the poor Congress workers remained brave. On 24 August 1942, a youth named Dalaaro was presented before me. He wore a dhoti-kurta and there was no fear on his face. I asked him why he had been arrested. He replied, "I want to participate in the satyagraha as per Gandhiji's command." I asked him, "How?" he responded that he could not cut the railway lines, but he would picket before the courts, and ask the farmers to not pay taxes.

I went to inspect Rae Bareilly jail on 20 August 1942. Some satyagrahis had been imprisoned in jail cells because they were shouting slogans in support of Mahatma Gandhi. I saw that a man was lying on the floor of the jail cell, and he had covered himself with a dhoti. His eyes were furious. The moment he saw me, he said, "You are Hindustani, you should be ashamed. If we are fighting for freedom, our struggle will also benefit you. We are also fighting for you." I quietly thought that the man was right. It is because of the sacrifices of such men that Indian people are working in high positions. The Jail Superintendent said, "This man is a scoundrel, he has been punished multiple times under Section 52, he has been sent here from his colony for this reason."

Many bogus people were also benefitting from those days of conflict. One of them was Maulvi Anis Ahmad; he called himself the Secretary of the All India Defence League. He would come to Rae Bareilly, collect a few followers, and have tea. He would present this as a significant meeting in his report and claim that resolutions were passed during it. He would write false reports against Indian Deputy Commissioners, and especially about me, and send those deceitful reports to Bishop, the Commissioner of Lucknow.

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He would claim that these officers had allegiances with the Congress. In those days, being sympathetic to the Congress or being patriotic were considered crimes. In order to give someone a bad name, they were given the title of Congressmen.

A lot of hatred emerged between the Indian and English I.C.S. officers. The English believed that Indian officers were trying to throw them out and take away their jobs. The Indian I.C.S. officers of U.P. were typically patriotic and they did not do anything against their people which would make them feel ashamed of being Indian; Panna Lal, a Commissioner and Heera Shivdasani were the exceptions to this rule. Shivdasani became the Collector of Agra after me. He got Governor Helitt weighed in gold bricks and gave away this gold for the war fund. This disturbing incident caused all officers to express their disgust.

In those days, a strange incident took place. This was related to the I.C.S. officer B.B. Singh. This incident was as follows:

B.B. Singh, or Brij Bhushan Singh, was a Secretary in the Lucknow Secretariat. He was married to a beautiful girl belonging to a royal Rajput clan in Agra. The girl's family had the custom that the maidservant caring for the girl before marriage would be sent along with the girl to her marital home. This way, a young maidservant named Balesiya was sent to his home to accompany his wife. After living there for some time, Balesiya had an affair with their driver and became pregnant with his child. When B.B. Singh's wife came to know, she was terribly upset and scolded her maidservant. She accepted her fault, but the driver started blaming the Sahib for her pregnancy.

It was some days ago that B.B. Singh had been told by an astrologer that that year was very troublesome for him; he also told him that on a particular day, Singh would murder someone. He shared this with his friend Shankar Prasad and another I.C.S. officer in the club, while having whisky. He claimed that the astrologer's words were proven wrong, and that his day had gone well, nothing of the sort predicted by the astrologer had happened. He returned home after that conversation, and his wife angrily told him about Balesiya's incident the moment he returned home. Agitated, he started shouting at Balesiya, and kicked the girl hard. She fell, became unconscious and died right away.

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This incident became the reason for their worries; it ended their times of peace and happiness. Instead of filing this incident as a report with the police, they anxiously took someone's advice, loaded her corpse in a car, took the car away at night and cremated her body somewhere. They kept worrying even after this action, and the next day, the driver spread word that B.B. Singh

himself had an extra-marital affair with that woman. And so, they killed her when she became pregnant. Rumours spread like wildfire and the astrologer's prediction rang true.

Kripa Sindhu Misra, an I.C.S. officer who worked in the Secretariat, was a horrible man. He belonged to a poor family. Some businessman had helped him get schooling and sent him abroad. There, he cleared the I.C.S. exam. When he returned, that businessman married off his daughter to him. He stayed with her for some time. They had two children. Later, he married her younger sister as well. They had one child. He left both his wives in Saharanpur; those poor wives used to weep, upset. They would narrate his dishonest behaviour to all the officers. This way, he married an actress named Meera. Like other people, B.B. Singh was also caught in the trap of this demon. This Misra used to live in their neighbourhood, and he used to go to his office in their car. They were on friendly terms with each other. When Misra came to know about the Balesiya incident, he told Chief Secretary Moody about this. Moody especially hated Indian officers, so this gave him the information needed to take revenge against B.B. Singh. He initiated an enquiry into this issue. You have read about the '*kripa*' that Kripa Sindhu Misra did for B.B. Singh, but you will read about how Misra fared later.<sup>139</sup>

An S.P. named N.C. Misra had been transferred from Rae Bareilly to Lucknow. He had spent his entire life without being married and was friendly with B.B. Singh. He used to refer to Mrs. B.B. Singh as 'Bhabhi ji', and when B.B. Singh would go to Rae Bareilly, he would stay in his house. This was all pretence, Misra ji was disloyal.

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He was appointed to conduct this enquiry. He appeared very happy-go-lucky, but he knew all the strategies used by the police which he deployed to impress the English with, and create false evidence against B.B. Singh.

Kailash Nath Katju, who had also been a Development Minister, was a renowned lawyer and progressive, patriotic man. He represented B.B. Singh as his lawyer. The Indian officers supported B.B. Singh; his friends, and especially Shankar Prasad, supported him physically, emotionally, and financially. They proved the honesty of their friendship, which people really respected later. The court released B.B. Singh, but misfortune still did not leave him. Their happy life became victim to sorrows, and his wife had to face a lot of problems. She started falling sick. They had one child; he could not be taken care of because she was sick, he died soon. Some days later, his wife also passed away. He was under a lot of stress.

B.B. Singh became the Excise Commissioner of Allahabad. Sometime later, he was travelling from Allahabad to Mirzapur by train. He overheard two men talking. They were saying that it was so unjust that an I.C.S. officer raped a poor maidservant and killed her when she became pregnant. Upon hearing that, he could not tolerate the humiliation and he sunk into depression. He returned home, and ate poison, thus ending his difficult life.

I completely sympathised with B.B. Singh, and I helped him financially, supporting him in whatever way I could. B.B. Singh was a warm, friendly, kind, and generous officer who

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<sup>139</sup> *Kripa* or *kirpa*, means blessing or grace. Here, Randhawa uses this word sarcastically as a play on words. Despite being named 'Kripa' the I.C.S. officer in question had no grace to speak of, according to Randhawa.

helped everyone. This series of events taught me about how adverse circumstances can surround a kind man. This also proved that fate has power.



Chapter 21  
**From Rae Bareilly to Delhi**  
**Becoming the Secretary of the Agricultural Council**  
 (March 1945 — November 1946)

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After living in Rae Bareilly for four years, we were quite tired of its hot climate, dullness and Talukdars. Electricity is the biggest blessing of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, but Rae Bareilly did not have electricity. This place would be devastatingly hot in May-June, loo would blow at night. We kept buckets of water near our beds, sprinkle the water on our beds three to four times, and wet the sheets to place over our bodies. We slept in the veranda during the monsoons, and a coolie would fan us. We would study with Petromax lanterns at night.

One day, when I was sitting in the veranda, an astrologer whom I had known since my time in Saharanpur came to meet me. He was a Bhatda from Amritsar and was named Lakhi Singh. He had also met me in Faizabad, and he had a bundle of letters. Except the Ministers, there was no high-level officer in U.P. whose letter he did not have. I would not pay him but would write whatever he told me in a diary and check how many things he said turned out to be true. His predictions about my transfers, postings, and births of my children, came true.

Lakhi Singh asked me which nostril I was breathing from. I pressed both my nostrils repeatedly and replied that I was breathing from my right nostril. He asked me to think of the name of a flower. After this, he closed his eyes, and told me that I had thought of the pansy flower.

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This was correct. He then asked me to ask him a question. I asked him about my transfer, when it would happen and where. He told me that I would be transferred to some big city in the West in the month of March. He also told me that I would have to go abroad on a long journey in 1945, and that a son would be born to me then.

Some days later, I received a letter from the Chief Secretary of Lucknow saying that the position of the Secretary of the Imperial Council of Agriculture Research was vacant, and asked if I wanted my name to be recommended to the Government of India for the same. I was very interested in village improvement and progressive agriculture, and so I said yes. Two weeks later, I got the orders for my transfer and we packed our luggage.

The people of Rae Bareilly's villages were very sad because of my transfer. In March, the flame of the forest trees become loaded with carmine flowers.<sup>140</sup> The villagers decorated the coach we were sitting in with these carmine flowers. Hundreds of people assembled at every station came to meet us during our journey from Rae Bareilly to Lucknow. They came to the railway stations playing drums and singing, and presented me with paan, betel-nut and coconut. Their love greatly affected me. U.P....C.P., no matter which province it is, if you can

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<sup>140</sup> *Palash or Dhak* trees are also called 'Flame of the Forest' plants because of the vivid carmine colour of their flowers.

empathise with the people, then they will definitely remember you positively.<sup>141</sup> I got the opportunity to go to Rae Bareilly again in 1966. I went to Dalmau and to two or three other places. Villagers met me everywhere I went, and we talked about old times. One villager discussed that in 1942-44, even though the war was going on and there was no government fund for village improvement, Randhawa Sahib got many high schools and panchayat offices constructed. He said that the people of today do not have that passion. The Deputy Commissioner of the zilla said that in those days, there used to be only one Deputy Commissioner in a zilla, while today, every M.L.A. acts like a Deputy Commissioner.

We faced a lot of trouble in looking for accommodation in Delhi. Getting a job in Delhi is easy, but finding a house is difficult. I went to Mes Ram, the Estate Officer. He told us that we should not expect a government house in the next three months because of high demand. I went to Raja Kushalpal Singh, the M.L.A. of Agra, and informed him about our problem of not being able to find a house. He told us that we could live in his government house, which was located at 4, Ferozeshah Road.

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We spent a few months in that house.

My office lay in a small room in North Block; it had a wooden partition. I often regretted that I had left the Deputy Commissioner's position. Our house in Rae Bareilly was so big and spacious, and we rented it at only 40 Rupees per month. I enjoyed authority over the entire zilla.

One day when I went to the Estate Office, I came to know that the contractor Sir Sobha Singh had built three buildings near the Golf Course. They were named Sujan Singh Park. These buildings had a lot of flats. I went there that very moment and chose flat number 24 on the second floor of Block A; it had 2 rooms, a kitchen, and a washroom. We would sleep on the roof of the third floor during the summers. This was our first and last experience of living in flats.

I was greatly interested in my work. Sir Herbert Stuart, the Vice President of I.C.A.R. who had previously served as the Director of Agriculture in Punjab, was a hard-working and experienced officer. But he could not think of novel ideas, and if new ideas were suggested to him, he would accept them with great difficulty. Sir Feroze Khareghat was the Secretary of the Agriculture Ministry. He had depth of ideas and held a lot of knowledge about the problems of agriculture. But he had difficulty taking a decision when a problem appeared, because he would remain puzzled, as he would come up with conflicting solutions. He was so double-minded that when he was asked in 1947 if he wanted to go to Pakistan or remain in India, he wrote yes for Pakistan and also for India.

Sir Joginder Singh was the Minister of Agriculture. He was a cultured and kind man. He also wrote many books in English, and his book *Nurjahan* is read till date. When I returned home from work, I was certain to meet Sir Joginder Singh on the way. His friends called him

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<sup>141</sup> As mentioned before, U.P. refers to the United Provinces (today the Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand regions). C.P. refers to the Central Provinces, roughly corresponding to the Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh regions today.

Jogi. He was married to an Englishwoman. She was old and ugly, and I would feel sorry that such a kind man had been captured by that witch. All of us make mistakes, but Jogi had made a big mistake. Sir Joginder Singh had a lot of experience in agriculture, and he was the first farmer to cultivate his fields with a tractor.

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I liked Dr. P.V. Sukhatme the most in I.C.A.R. He competed with a very cunning Bengali named Professor P.C. Mahalanobis. In order to estimate the productivity of the fields, Sukhatme developed the technique of random sampling which, in our opinion, was better than Mahalanobis's scheme. Sukhatme could not compete with Mahalanobis's scheme and he finally left his job at I.C.A.R. to join the F.A.O. where he made a good name for himself.

I focused on the *Indian Farming* journal at I.C.A.R. and published a special issue named *Developing Village India*. I presented the schemes of village improvement being implemented in India in a new way through this issue. This was later published as a book by Macmillan.

In those days, I went to Lahore. I was viewing books at the Rama-Krishna store and I met Devinder Satyarthi there. Long beard, angry eyes, and hair touching his shoulders. This was the Devinder Satyarthi who had done great work in collecting the folk songs of Punjab. I had really liked his book *Giddha*. I offered tea to Satyarthi in a restaurant, and then I decided to buy clothes from Anarkali Market. I bought a dupatta for Iqbal. Satyarthi asked me to buy a dupatta for his wife as well. I asked him to choose a dupatta. He chose two dupattas of different colours. I paid for them and got rid of him. I thought about him living like a beggar; he was a talented man and so if he got some work, he could write prolifically. Satyarthi was a brilliant photographer and he was also experienced in making the layouts of books. I returned to Delhi, gave him the job of Assistant Editor in I.C.A.R., and gave him the task of making the layout of *Developing Village India*, the special issue of the *Indian Farming* journal. He did that job very well.

It became apparent in 1946 that the English would leave India. Sir Herbert Stuart was retiring and leaving and the choice of I.C.A.R.'s Vice-President had to be made. Sir Joginder Singh was the Minister of Agriculture and Education and he had to find a candidate.

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Sir Daatar Singh was a famous landlord from Montgomery, and he was interested in animal husbandry. Daatar Singh was heavily built; he trimmed his beard and coloured it. He wore a white turban and thick glasses. He was fond of playing cards; bridge parties would be held in his house every evening and on every Sunday, Vishnu and Bhagwan Sahay would also participate in the parties. He wanted that position. Sir Joginder Singh did not like Daatar Singh. He believed that Daatar Singh was a good host and won people over by feeding them, but he had a poor intellect. When the English Government gave him the title of 'Sir', then Moinuddin I.C.S., the Deputy Commissioner of Montgomery at that time, wrote these lines:

“He became ‘Sir’ Daatar,  
by grazing buffaloes.

He does not read or write;  
his eyes have gone bad  
by staring at women.”

I met Sir Joginder Singh when he was lying sick in the hospital. I convinced him to make Sir Daatar Singh the Vice-President of I.C.A.R. Daatar Singh could not easily read and write in English. I told Sir Daatar that this work was not difficult. Whenever there would be a complicated problem, I would get two notes typed, one for me and one for him. This way, he could start working well. He was already skilled at talking loudly in meetings and chatting with others, and compared with the other aspirants for the role, he was more familiar with the problems of farming, landholding, and animal husbandry. A famous saying appears true in this case: When the Aroras girdle their loins, they reach Lahore in  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a mile.<sup>142</sup>

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<sup>142</sup> “When one is determined about achieving something, they achieve it faster than before.” This implies that once the garrulous Daatar Singh decided to perform to the best of his ability, he began accomplishing his tasks successfully.

Chapter 22**My First Air Travel**

(6 October – 20 November 1945)

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I got an invitation from F.A.O., Food and Agricultural Organisation, in September 1945 saying that a World Conference on issues of agriculture would be held in the city of Quebec. The Indian delegation had eight members and I was chosen as the Secretary of that delegation. Diwan Sir T. Vijay Raghavachari was the leader of the delegation. He was a thin man, 70 years old but young at heart. When women would have difficulty in pronouncing his name, he would say call me 'Dear'. He had a good memory for stories about sex and would keep us entertained. He wore a high-necked coat and a Mysore turban with a golden border on his head. This was why people would stare at him wherever he went. There were two representatives of farmers and landowners in our group, Sardar Ujjal Singh, and Sardar Habibullah. Ujjal Singh was a short man, but he was smart. He had planted a 200-acre large orchard of maltas in Sargodha. Habibullah's ancestors were Sikh, and his brother U. Kiramat was the Principal of Government College, Lahore. Habibullah was a large-hearted man, and he became friends with me. The fourth member was Raj Wadey from Bombay; he was brother-in-law of M.R. Bhide and became part of the Foreign Service later. Delhi's Professor Dr. V.K.R.V. Rao was the fifth member. Because of his long name, the Americans used to call him alphabetical Rao.

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Rao spoke very well, and he would not stop once he had started talking. It felt like a tap had been left open. There were two more delegates in the group; Dr. Beni Prasad, an expert on fish, and D.R. Sethi, who was the Director of Agriculture in Bihar. Dr. Ackroyd was the English delegate, he met us directly at the conference.

We set off from the airport of Palam on 6 October 1945 at 7.30 am in the morning. We were travelling in a Dakota, it had seven chairs and a bench. This Dakota reached Jodhpur at 9:30; we could see the fort of Jodhpur from afar, and gaze at the box-like houses of the city lying in the midst of sand dunes.

We stayed in Jodhpur for 30 minutes, and then reached Karachi in three hours. We stayed with Justice Tyeb in Karachi for a day. On 7 October, we boarded a Dakota at Maripur aerodrome at 2 am in the night. On the way, we stopped at Jirasi and Shayaba airports, and finally reached Qahira. I felt air-sick in the plane, and I vomited the moment we landed; all my clothes were spoiled. We got our passports checked, hired a taxi, and went to Palace Hotel in Heliopolis. We saw Egyptian waiters wearing long cloaks and red caps in the hotel; they looked like thugs.

The houses in Qahira have two or three floors, and date trees usually grow in the backyards. We went to see the pyramids in the evening and returned before night fell.

Our York airplane set off from Qahira on 8 October at 4:30 am. Our airplane was flying at a height of 8000 feet at a speed of 240 miles/hour. Its flight was smooth, and I began enjoying the journey. The sun's rays coloured the clouds golden. The green water of the Mediterranean

lay below, while the blue sky lay above. We reached the island of Malta at 10 am in the morning. There were some broken airplanes on a hill, and we could see the chimneys of sunken ships near the port of Fileba. These were the signs of the War which was now over. Malta's earth is barren and dry, and no trees could be seen other than olive trees. There were stone walls around the farms.

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We flew over the island of Sardinia to reach Marseilles. The red-topped houses, blue rivers, yellow-leafed poplars, and maples, all looked very beautiful from the plane. The more northwards we flew, the greener the fields looked. When we reached near the English Channel, we saw pits created by bombs in the fields, burnt pine trees, and fallen buildings. These were the signs of the War; they were evidence of the destruction caused by the Germans.

We reached Bournemouth airport at 3:30. We showed our passports and health certificates, and passed through customs. We were not stopped anywhere, and the English worked politely and quickly. We crossed Southampton and reached Victoria Station at around 6:30, at last. Women were also working as coolies. There was a shortage of men because of the War, and this was why women had to do such work. We got our luggage carried and went outside. We telephoned India House from a booth. I carried Sir Vijay's box of spices and attaché case. The India House got three rooms for us in the Waldorf Hotel. I stayed in Room number 538. The food of the hotel was bad, dry bread, a little bit of butter, and boiled carrots and cauliflower. The washroom had neither soap, nor towels or warm water. We had breakfast at 9 am the next day. A piece of dry bread, an omelette of egg-powder, two sugar cubes, three spoons of milk and a kettle of tea. This was our breakfast. The War was over, but the people of England were in a bad state. They were facing these circumstances with great courage, and nobody made a hue and cry about it.

The next day, I decided to shop. Everything except caps could only be bought with coupons. When the shops would open, all the stock would sell within an hour. I got my identity card made from Calmatal<sup>143</sup> Hall and bought a packet of chocolate. I did not need this, but I wanted to understand how the people were living there. This experience taught me that life had become very hard there because of the War.

I reached the Biological Laboratory of London University on 12 October and met J.B.S. Haldane.

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He was engrossed in his work. I told him about my idea of the 'museum of evolution' and took his advice on it. I made this museum in Chandigarh in 1968.

We reached London Air Transport Centre, St. James House, Piccadilly on 14 October at 11 am. We got a group air ticket from there. We reached Boston Station at 8:30 pm. I gave my chocolates, which I had bought with great difficulty, to the taxi driver so that he could give them to his children. He thanked me a lot. The next morning, we reached Kilmarnock Station.

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<sup>143</sup> As transliterated.

We had entered Scotland. This is a beautiful country, it has clean villages, fat red cows, and groups of oak, sycamore, and chestnut trees in the fields.

On 15 October, we set off from the aerodrome of Prestwick. We saw many icebergs floating in the Atlantic Ocean. We saw the island of Iceland on the way, it was covered with snow. We also saw blue lakes surrounded by snow-laden mountains. We reached Montreal after 15 hours of flying, at 9 am in the morning. We boarded the train at 9:30 am and reached Quebec at 1:30 am. We participated in the conference two hours later.

Quebec is a French-speaking province; it felt like we had reached some province in France. They had also planted poplar trees along the roads, which reminded me of France. The conference was held in Chateau de Frontenac. Sir Giriya Shankar Bajpai, who was the Indian High Commissioner in Washington, spoke in the General Session. He said that the farmers should get appropriate selling prices as per their crops. This would prevent the world from falling into the maze of the Depression again. Bajpai spoke very well and we were happy to have heard him speak.

The other delegates were good people, but Sethi and Beni Prasad kept behaving horribly. They were only interested in badmouthing their group members. Sethi was dreaming of becoming the Vice-President of I.C.A.R. I thought that if such a miserly man occupied that position of authority, it would not be good for the organisation.

There were three Canadian women with our delegation who worked as our typists. One of them was working with me. When I went for lunch, she would also sit with me.

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Seeing that she was sitting with me, Sethi and Beni Prasad started spreading rumours about us.

After the conference ended, we went to a place named Sainte-Anne-de-Beaupré. There is a round building here which has a huge painting with the dimensions of 45x360 feet. Light falls on the painting from above and the viewers stand in the middle of the room, gazing at it. This shows the city of Jerusalem, and the birth, miracles, last supper, case before Pontius Pilate, and crucifixion scenes of Christ. About 90 years ago, this great painting was prepared in France at the cost of 3 lakh dollars. After this, we saw the Agricultural College of this area. Here, cows were being milked with machines. We were warmly offered maple juice to drink. This juice is heated and then sugar is made from it.

We went to Washington after the conference. There, I gave my conference report to Giriya Shankar Bajpai. Washington is a spacious city. The Washington Memorial is a 555-foot-high building; there is a lift fixed inside. One can see a great view of the city from this building. We saw the great paintings of European artists in Freer Art Gallery and National Art Gallery. The Smithsonian Institute has all the inventions contributed by American scientists to the world.

We had heard a lot about the Tennessee Valley Authority. The cost of going from Washington to Knoxville was only 26 Dollars. We asked for permission from the Government of India to go and see this 'scheme'.<sup>144</sup> We reached at 7:30 pm in the evening and stayed in

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<sup>144</sup> By 'scheme', Randhawa refers to the practice of high yield cultivation in the farms of the Tennessee Valley.

Hotel Andrew Jackson. The waiters in this hotel were Negroes.<sup>145</sup> Sir Vijay greatly hated them. We were passing through the market the next morning, when we saw a large crowd gathered around a car. This car was German leader Goering's car. Those white Americans began staring at Ujjal Singh and forgot all about the car.

I observed the farms of Tennessee to note the features that we could adapt to the Indian context. Growing hybrid maize had become a tradition there, and that had increased the productivity of the maize by three times. I thought that I.C.A.R. should also implement such a research scheme so as to increase the productivity of maize.

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Secondly, I observed that the farmers there used electricity-driven motors. They use those machines to draw out water, cut fodder, and sharpen their implements. So, I thought that the tradition of using electric motors should be developed in India, which would end our dependence on well water, and help us undertake irrigation with tube wells. This motor can also be used to extract juice out of sugarcane. These two ideas proved to be very useful with time. They led to the transformation of agriculture in Punjab. It is through this lens that I see how useful this trip was for our nation.

We saw many farms. The farmers live in their fields, and their cattle and hens also live on their farms. Every farm has an aluminium silo where corn is kept. A man and his boy can manage a 200-acre farm very comfortably. The farmers of America are rich, but they are not as welcoming as Punjabi farmers. Our group was not even offered a cup of tea by anyone.

On 1 November, we reached New York and stayed in Hotel New York. We saw that a beautiful girl wearing a crimson frock stood in the lobby. Three young American men started dancing around her. New York is a large city, and no other city in the world can be compared with it. It has spacious roads and tall buildings, many of these buildings have 50-60 floors. Four lines of motorcars move on both sides. It feels like everyone is rushing to get to work. I was interested in the science museums, and my companions Ujjal Singh and Habibullah kept sampling white women in night-clubs.

One day, I had a dream that Iqbal had given birth to a beautiful boy. Upon reaching home, I came to know that this boy was born on 28 October 1945. I have the habit of not writing letters to anyone when I am travelling. I put all my energy and focus into experiencing the country that I have gone to. This was why I had no information about home.

I found Hayden Planetarium to be the most interesting site in New York. Everyone sits in a round building and the lecturer takes a torch and gives information about the moon and stars.

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<sup>145</sup> When Randhawa wrote this, he used the term 'Negro' to refer to Black people, a term that is politically incorrect and unacceptable today, but was in common parlance then.



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One can see the moon and stars in the sky and visit the whole of the galaxy. Soft music plays in the background. This was a strange atmosphere, and I felt that great power which has created this universe.

On 15 November, we sat in the Colonial Airlines airplane in New York. Sitting in the airplane, we saw that the trees which had red and yellow leaves before, had lost all their leaves by then; the grass had also become khaki in colour. There were many air pockets in the air and so our flight had a lot of turbulence. We reached Montreal at 2 pm in the afternoon. It was very cold, and the buses had been heated. When we were dropped off at the hotel, we felt like our noses and ears would fall off. A very swift, cold wind blew.

We reached the airport at 10 am the next day and boarded a 4-engine Liberator airplane which used to be formerly used as a fighter plane for dropping bombs. There were only four travellers in this, I, Ujjal Singh, a woman, and the airman from New Zealand. There was no central heating in that plane. We also did not get flying suits. The temperature was -20° Celsius and both of us became numb with the cold. When our plane reached Gander in Newfoundland, my feet were completely numb, and I walked with difficulty. We drank warm soup and opened a bottle of brandy, some of which I drank and gave the rest to Ujjal Singh. It was so cold there that if one would urinate, it would also freeze. The next airplane was heated with hot air, and we were given warm flying suits. We covered ourselves with as many blankets as we could find.

After flying from here, we reached an island called Azores. Its population is Portuguese, and the island is dry and barren. This place is very windy, and no trees can grow here. The people looked poor, many of them were not even wearing shoes. We rested in an army barrack till 1.

The next day, at around 6 am we left from Lagan, a city in Azores, and reached Rabat in 6 hours. Rabat is a famous city of Morocco.

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This place has clean bungalows, lantanas of bougainvillea are planted in front of them. Creepers of *Begonia venusta* climb the walls, their deep orange flowers looked very pretty. There were large shops on both sides of the road, and avenues of date trees lay in the middle of the road. This is the effect of French people on the life here. French people take great interest in town-planning, and they have established beautiful cities wherever they have gone. Here, we stayed in Hotel Balima.

Our plane set off at 7 am the next day and we saw Tripoli, Benghazi and Tobruk from the air. Here, a devastating war was fought between the Indian and German armies. The German army fought under the command of Rommel. The population of this city inhabits the area near the sea, and there are sand dunes behind their settlement.

We reached Qahira again on 19 November. We had to obtain our visa from the Iraqi Embassy there. We obtained this visa with great difficulty. We boarded a flying boat on 21 November. This had seats for 40 people, and it could only land in water. It had four engines and it looked like a whale from afar. It flew at the speed of 120 miles/hour, and one could clearly see the world below. Canals, rivers, orchards of date trees, and lines of camels looked

as small as toys. Our flying boat landed on the lakes of Khalidiya and Habbaniyah, and it reached Basra at 5 pm in the evening. There we stayed in Hotel Shatt al-Arab. The hotel was very good, but there were kutchra buildings nearby which reminded one of the city of Chichawatni.

The next day, we flew over Dubai and Bahrain, reached Karachi on 22 November at 6:30 pm and spent one night in the Carlton Hotel. We reached Delhi at 5 am in the morning and this journey ended. Ujjal Singh's wife had come to pick him up. Ujjal Singh hugged her tightly the moment he stepped out of the plane, as if he had missed her for years.

I was happy to return to my flat after one and a half months. One can see the dome-shaped pavilions on the bulwarks of Purana Qila from there.<sup>146</sup> Clear skies, cool wind, and a historic scene. How beautiful our Delhi is, and our winter. How warm our people are. One values these things only after going abroad. I am very thankful to God that he helped me return safe and sound.

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The broken Dakotas of the war, which we had to travel in, could have fallen anywhere on the way.

I went to Gojra the next day. I saw that Iqbal had become very weak. She got terrible dysentery after the childbirth, it refused to stop. I think she kept worrying about me. Somebody has rightly said, worry leads one to death. I also felt like I was reborn after that dangerous journey.

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<sup>146</sup> *Chhatri*, or pavilions belong to the Rajput style of architecture.

Chapter 23  
**Inviting Trouble**  
(1946-1948)

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The British were preparing to leave India, and the Congress and Muslim League were in conflict. Riots broke out all over the country, with Delhi as the epicentre of violence. Mr. Sharma, the Deputy Secretary in the Ministry of Agriculture, came to meet me in the North Block. He informed me of the chaos in the city — stabbing had become a routine affair. These rumours slowly spread in the secretariat of the Government of India; no one felt safe anymore. The Muslim League had organized stabbings in Delhi in a planned manner, the Hindus of Delhi were especially fearful.

It was November 1946. In those days, I used to reside in an apartment in Sujan Singh Park, which was owned by the Delhi-based millionaire, Sardar Sobha Singh. The Editor of a newspaper named *Dawn*, Altaf Hussain, was my neighbour.<sup>147</sup> Even though Altaf was very distant, his wife was warm and used to visit Iqbal.

One day, Sardar Ranjit Singh, a well-known contractor in Delhi and a close friend of the Editor of *The Hindustan Times*, Lala Durga Das, came to meet me in Sujan Singh Park. He told me that I had been recommended for the position of the next Deputy Commissioner of Delhi. In those days, being a Deputy Commissioner was like voluntarily taking risks and facing ordeals.

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The next day, I was called to the office of the Home Ministry in the South Block Office by Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel. He told me, “We are thinking of appointing you as the next Deputy Commissioner of Delhi, we do not trust the English Deputy Commissioner, Le Bailly. You can work with Le Bailly as the Additional Deputy Commissioner for 10 to 15 days and get acquainted with the city of Delhi. After that, you can take charge.”

[W. F. G.] Le Bailly was an Englishman with an inflammable temperament. People used to call him ‘Allah-Beli’. He would chew his pipe or pencil, whatever he had in his mouth, when angry. All British officers were opposed to the Congress, Le Bailly also held the same view. I had a feeling that he would create problems for me, so it would be better for him to leave as soon as possible.

I told Patel that I was well-acquainted with the city of Delhi and that I was experienced in administering many cities. I had previously served as the Additional District Magistrate of Allahabad, and as a Collector in Agra. I told him that I was ready to take charge the next day itself, so he could ask Le Bailly to leave the next day.

Patel admired my self-confidence; he trusted my ability to handle the difficult task ahead. I shifted my luggage to 17, Rajpur Road, on 11 November 1946. It is important to check

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<sup>147</sup> *Dawn* is a popular newspaper published in Pakistan till date. It is well-regarded for its depth of research and opinions on Pakistani, and South Asian affairs.

the treasury before taking charge — the treasury of Delhi was full of stamps and notes worth lakhs of rupees. An Anglo-Indian Additional District Magistrate sat beside me as I counted the bundles of notes. We would be informed of stabbings after every five minutes. I controlled my anger,<sup>148</sup> and decided to leave only after completing the counting of treasury bills — I would make sure that the violence would be in check by tomorrow. I finished the counting by about 1 p.m.; by that time, ten people had become victim to stabbing.

Savitri Prasad, my Personal Assistant, was a very bright and efficient P.C.S officer. He had legal expertise. We would analyse the situation together, after which I would ask him to prepare an order of a certain type — he would type the said order immediately. I knew from experience that nobody except goons engages in riots. I had ordered the Thanedars to bring their lists of goons. The lists were now ready. In those days, many respectable and peace-loving people of both religious persuasions would visit me or write me letters. They would also give me names of goons.

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So, I understood the pattern of rioting and identified the participants in it through both these means. I ordered arrests of all those goons, which improved the circumstances tremendously.

Chaudhary Nabi Ahmed was the City Magistrate. He was a calm and organized person. He ensured peace in Chandni Chowk and Khari Baoli. Kanwar Mohinder Singh Bedi also enjoyed a good reputation among respectable Muslims. This is how officers belonging to different religions suppressed the thugs. The Jana Sangh would write threatening letters to me when their workers were arrested.

I had hired a taxi numbered DL-7. I would immediately set off for the site of the incident with my two bodyguards. The bodyguards would carry sten-guns. I would never carry a weapon other than a baton. The police would become more alert because I would reach so fast.

The circumstances worsened after a few days. The Pul Bangash area had become a 'butcher-house'. One morning, I saw scattered corpses of many Hindus. They were all poor labourers who had come to buy rations. Muslim butchers of the surrounding area had killed them. There was no personal animosity between the killers and the victims. I have observed that men, dogs, and roosters are all animals who do not hesitate to attack by themselves without incitement.

I saw an old Arora Sikh man sitting in a tonga with his daughter, while I patrolled the Pul Bangash area. When I asked him where he was going, he told me, "I am taking my daughter for her matriculation examinations." After some time, I saw him lying by the side of the road, breathing his last breath, because somebody had stabbed him in the stomach on the way. As these stabbing incidents increased, I ordered the police to shoot the attackers on sight. A Sikh constable obeyed this order and shot a Muslim attacker who was stabbing a Hindu. This struck fear in the hearts of the rioters.

Sometimes the situation would become so critical that I would doubt whether it would ever improve, but I have realised that one should keep analysing the situation and take action.

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<sup>148</sup> *Kasees Watna* in the original

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We were bound to get results in the end. Sometimes, I would ask myself why I had taken those risks deliberately. What was the need? Then I would tell myself that man is born to solve problems, and someone must take charge, otherwise our world will be controlled by criminals and we will not be able to live good lives. Criminals must be removed from our society just like weeds are pulled out from our gardens.

One evening at around 5 p.m., when I was at home in Number 17, Rajpur Road, I received intel that a procession of around 40,000 Muslims were carrying *tazias* in Paharganj,<sup>149</sup> and insisting that they wished to cross the Hindu *mohalla*. These processions had fixed routes and ordinarily, these routes were not changed. On the other hand, it was feared that if their passionate exhibitions were curbed, they would react by breaking laws and destroying public order. S.S.P. Robinson, who had fetched me in his jeep, looked elated. Upon reaching the site, I saw those passionate Muslims sitting in a dharna.<sup>150</sup> I realized that they would riot if they were stopped with force. I consulted Mohinder Singh Bedi, who advised me to let them pass through their desired route. I asked him to convince the Hindu leaders of the mohalla to let the Muslims pass. Having realized the fermenting danger in the situation, the leaders readily agreed. I asked them to tell all the residents to not leave their houses during the procession. The Muslim procession thus passed through the Hindu mohalla, shouting ‘Ya-Ali, Ya-Ali’. I believe that if I had not comprehended the delicacy and urgency of the situation, Paharganj would have burned to ashes. Robinson seemed disappointed with this peaceful resolution of the conflict.

Curfew would be imposed in Delhi during dangerous times. The people were ordered to remain indoors at night. I would patrol different localities with the police. We were greeted by absolute silence; the lanes and mohallas wore a deserted look. The occasional barking of a dog would sometimes break the silence. Anyone breaking curfew and leaving their house would be taken away to the police station. Since the curfew was highly effective in controlling the violence initiated by criminals, I decided to use these controls for further social benefit.

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There were many stray dogs in Delhi. I asked the Health Officer to take care of them,<sup>151</sup> because they were susceptible to rabies, and they spread the disease among people by biting them. He responded that he needed Dalits to catch or kill them, the Baniyas would merely tie ropes around their necks and pretend like they were pets. Nights were quiet; they were marked by the complete absence of people — one could only see stray dogs. The Health Officer would lace gulab jamuns with strychnine, and load basketfuls of the poisoned sweets on trucks. They would then be fed to the dogs. Many trucks loaded with dog carcasses would then be taken away.

Maulana Allama Mashriqi was also residing in Delhi. He arrived in Delhi with his Balochi army. Intending to capture Delhi, he set up camp at Fatehpuri Mosque with his army.

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<sup>149</sup> For the Shia Muslim procession of Muharram.

<sup>150</sup> For passion, Randhawa uses the word ‘junoon’ or junooni’.

<sup>151</sup> Here it refers to culling them.

Jinnah had organised a meeting of the Muslim League in the Imperial Hotel. The Khaksar army was prepared to attack his meeting with spades,<sup>152</sup> and photographer P.N. Sharma was about to capture the scene in a photograph. Upon coming to know of the meeting, I sent a lot of police to the scene. The Muslim Leaguers went after the photographer and he hid in the room of a Sikh girl to save his life. If I had not reached there on time, I am certain the Khaksar army would have harmed Jinnah. When I met Patel regarding that issue, he informed me that there was no need to take such swift action in that case.

Studying the patterns of Khaksar attacks made us decide to mitigate their threats of violence. I had reports that they wanted to kill Maulana Azad, Nehru and Patel. They would carry spades, parade in the bazaars, and retire in the mosque at night after shutting its main gate. I met Patel and requested him to ask Chief Commissioner Khurshid Ahmed Khan to accompany me to arrest the Khaksars. I knew that if I went to arrest them by myself, the Muslims would cause disturbances and claim that their mosque had been dishonoured.

At 10:00 p.m., Khurshid, I, and the Senior Superintendent of Police, D.C. Lal went to Fatehpuri with a force of two hundred policemen. Khurshid appealed to the Khaksars via loudspeaker, requesting them to peacefully accept arrest and prevent the mosque from being dishonoured.

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They were not ready to listen to such appeals. They organised themselves into rows, prepared to fight the police. The gun squad hurled gas-bombs at their door. I noticed a huge column placed outside the door. Around twenty policemen lifted it and began hitting the windows in their door with it. The windows broke down, and the gas-bombs reduced the Khaksar formation to chaos. Following that, the policemen removed their shoes, and entered the mosque. All the Khaksars were arrested and imprisoned.<sup>153</sup>

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<sup>152</sup> The word is *bailchi*: shovel or spade

<sup>153</sup> See Malik, Muhammad Aslam (2000), *Allama Inayatullah Mashraqi: A Political Biography*, Oxford University Press. Mashriqi opposed Partition and advocated for Hindu-Muslim brotherhood, arranging for an 'army' of Khaksars to fight the Muslim League.

Chapter 24  
**Delhi**  
**Fear, Fear and Extreme Fear**  
(1946-47)

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Delhi became tenser as independence drew nearer. The city was distressed; we could feel fear in the air.

I was interested in science, art, and developmental projects. I was passionate about village development and progress; in fact, I would go to villages and study developmental projects by managing my time during that situation of impending violence. I established libraries in Shahadara, Najafgarh, Narola and Mehrauli with the support of the local people.

I also organised an exhibition of the paintings of the famous artist, Nicholas Roerich, and encouraged the rich elite of Delhi to purchase those awe-inspiring paintings for the All India Fine Arts Society. Some of these paintings are present in the Chandigarh Museum. Nehru inaugurated that exhibition.

A tree plantation week was celebrated in July 1947, which Nehru inaugurated in the Old Fort. During this week, flowering trees were planted in all parks of Delhi.

A mountain of trouble descended onto Delhi in the beginning of August. First, the Yamuna river flooded, submerging many villages. Riots began again after the floods.

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Many sepoy in Delhi police belonged to Jhelum and Rawalpindi — they carried weapons like bren-guns and sten-guns. Hindu and Sikh officers were scared of them. The S.S.P., D.C. Lal, did not want to divest them of their weapons. I made him meet Patel, but he hesitated before him as well. He was transferred because of this attitude. Sanjivi telephoned his residence the next morning, his wife picked up the phone and said, “Sahib is sleeping.” Sanjivi answered, “Tell your Sahib to pack his bags.” Nazir Chand Mehar from the Frontier province was appointed as his replacement.

As soon as the decision to partition British India was finalised, Punjabi Muslims, whether they were policemen or magistrates, left for Pakistan. The administrative framework of Delhi was disturbed by these shifts. The Hindu and Sikh policemen who had arrived from West Punjab had struggled against the Muslim majorities of that area, so they did not sympathise with the Muslims of Delhi. The Delhi Muslims began feeling like orphans.

The state’s arrangements went out of control when the Hindu and Sikh refugees came to Delhi. Executing martial law in Delhi had been advised. Patel did not agree with this suggestion; he was proved right.

I would call for the army whenever the need arose, that is, when the police was unable to control the violence. One must note that during those dangerous times, there were only two companies of the army in the Delhi cantonment.

It was rumoured that the Rohillas of Rohilkhand,<sup>154</sup> and Meos of Gurgaon and Bharatpur would attack Delhi.<sup>155</sup> National guards of the Muslim League, dressed in khaki and wearing iron helmets, were roaming in jeeps and trucks. I passed an order that no political party could use trucks or jeeps; their vehicles would be impounded if they would not obey this order. This order suppressed their fervour, they cooled down to some extent.

Personally, I was in danger — other than being secured by police guards and bodyguards, I decided to safeguard my person by not following any set schedule. I was habituated to taking walks, but I would not take walks on any road in Delhi.

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I would leave for some village in my car, without informing anyone, help those villagers and take walks there.

I wore a Muslim League cap at times. This sparked off rumours that I go to mosques for intel. A Muslim informer of mine would give me information about any plotting and planning being conducted in mosques. Here, I would like to mention that the C.I.D. of the police was a very weak organisation.

A large riot broke out in Birla Mills when Hindu workers attacked Muslim workers. At that time, no worker would pay heed to the Communist leaders because they did not have any influence over them. From the mill, the riot spread to Sabzi Mandi and Paharganj.

The Secretaries and Joint Secretaries from the Central Secretariat had been appointed as Special Magistrates in the towns. K.S. Misra, who had earned a bad name for himself because of the B.B. Singh case, was appointed to Mehrauli. There, when he tried to stop some army men from looting, one *jawan* shot him dead. His widow, Meera, was a film star — she was always drenched in perfume. She befriended Khurshid, not bothered that her husband had been recently killed. We got his murder investigated; I showed her the enquiry report later. She did not appear to be interested in the report.

The Central Emergency Committee, which was presided over by Lord Mountbatten, and of which Nehru, Patel, Baldev Singh and Mathai were members,<sup>156</sup> decided to recruit a special police force to save Delhi from ruin. Many well-qualified youth were recruited for this purpose after the appeal. When we inspected this recruitment drive, we came to know that most of these youth belonged to the Jana Sangh, because the Congress had little influence in the educated Hindu constituencies.

The orders for appointments into the special police were issued under my signature. I came across some orders with my faked signatures. Upon initiating an enquiry, it was found that this had been organised by a Congress leader. When this matter was brought to Patel's notice, he ordered the arrest of that leader for forgery. There were two factions within the Congress — while one was Patel's group, the other was Nehru's.

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<sup>154</sup> Originally of Pashtun ethnicity, Rohillas are a warrior caste from Uttar Pradesh, India.

<sup>155</sup> Meos are a Muslim Rajput community from North West India.

<sup>156</sup> Jawaharlal Nehru, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Baldev Singh and John Mathai.



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Upon considering this, I did not deem it appropriate to arrest that leader.

The Muslims had deserted the villages of Gurgaon and Delhi. One of those villages was named Tihar. The Pakistan High Commissioner and some Baniya Congress workers made the false complaint that the administration was driving Muslims out of those villages. The Lieutenant of Tihar, Sultan Ali, came to participate in the meeting of the Emergency Committee. He said, "It is unfair to say that the Deputy Commissioner or his subordinates are driving us out of Delhi. We cannot stay here because of the difficult circumstances ushered in by Partition." Sultan Ali requested the Pakistan High Commissioner to make arrangements for the migration of the Muslims of Tihar to Pakistan. When the Commissioner refused, Sultan Ali exclaimed, "We will board the refugee train and go to Pakistan. Your police will hurt us. Our souls will reach Pakistan, and our bodies will remain here." The Pakistan High Commissioner agreed in the face of Sultan Ali's adamant demand and determination to leave India. When lies rule the day, and someone speaks the truth, he deserves appropriate appreciation. Sultan Ali was a member of Chaudhary Chhotu Ram's Unionist Party — which used to represent the farmers and landowners of Punjab. I respect and value Sultan Ali till date.

Different kinds of people were attempting to overcome the reality and spectre of violence in the turmoil that struck Delhi. A woman named Mridula Sarabhai, who wore salwars and had short hair, was one of them. It was difficult to gauge if she was Hindu or Muslim, man, or woman, by her appearance. On closer enquiry, it was revealed that she was the daughter of Seth Ambalal Sarabhai, who had special enmity with Patel. Mridula had great influence on Nehru. Security Inspector Amar Singh told me that she kept a protection amulet under Nehru's pillow.<sup>157</sup>

Mridula had her own private Peace Army. They worked for resettling Muslims in villages. Some Muslims had converted to Hinduism out of fear. When Patel got wind of Mridula's activities, he said, "Should I make those coming from Pakistan sit on my head? There is no dearth of Hindus here."<sup>158</sup> Patel was very capable at management and was self-aware. He had good practical, common-sense knowledge.

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He had realised that it was not just a riot between the two religious groups, it was a civil war. He also knew that the refugees who had lost their properties, lands and houses in Pakistan would not be satisfied until they were given something equivalent here.

I also understood that. Both communities were at war with each other. It is wrong to say that the British spread hatred amongst Hindus and Muslims. The hatred pre-existed. They were merely exploiting and benefitting from it. A similar analogy is that of two dogs chained together; they keep barking at each other, and occasionally bite one another as well — this was the condition of Hindu-Muslim relations during colonial rule. These chains were broken after

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<sup>157</sup> Protection amulet here is *taveet* in Punjabi, or *taveez* in Urdu.

<sup>158</sup> By 'those' Patel means the Hindu and Sikh refugees coming from Pakistan. Also notice here that Randhawa refers to male leaders by their surnames, but Mridula Sarabhai is referred to by her first name, an interesting outcome of gender dynamics in narrative.

independence, resulting in chaos. In the end, the weak would submit to the strong, and peace would resume.

The important Secretaries of the Government of India arrived for the meeting of the Emergency Committee. H.M. Patel was the most capable and aware of those Secretaries — he had a clear head, would grasp situations quickly and make sound decisions. Minister Bhabha was also a capable individual, he would comprehend the needs of the context, and take quick and appropriate decisions. We observed that as more Muslims left the mohallas, it became more peaceful. The Muslims were collecting in the Old Fort (*Purana Qila*). The Emergency Committee decided to begin the services of special trains to take these refugees to Pakistan. But Punjab was in the throes of large-scale rioting, and Sikh groups were attacking trains leaving for Pakistan. Those fools did not realize that their actions were putting their Hindu and Sikh brethren in Pakistan into more danger; they kept obstructing the passage of Muslims to Pakistan. Patel went to Amritsar and advised the Sikh leaders there to allow the trains to leave. This made an impact, and the trains started to leave for Pakistan.

Now, since most of the Muslims had left for Pakistan, new differences and divisions arose between Hindu and Sikh refugees. I received information that Special Magistrate G.K. Puri was evicting *Bhapas* from vacated Muslim houses and allotting those houses to Hindus. I arrived at Paharganj and found that Puri had tied a Bhapa Sikh's hands with his turban, complaining that his money had been stolen by that man. I got his wrists released and ordered Puri to return the previously allotted house to him. Puri was Bakhshi Tek Chand's son-in-law, he was later sent to Pakistan as the Indian High Commissioner.

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Now I will talk about the national leaders during those times of conflict. Patel had the quality of talking little and listening well. He looked like a strict man. I still recall a stray comment by a Delhi tonga-wallah, "God has taken away the *nur* from his face." But I observed that he was a kind-hearted and determined person. He would welcome me very warmly and respectfully whenever I would meet him in the evening; he would ask me to sit on the sofa closer to his seat. Normally, he would have dinner in his thali at 7:30 p.m., every day. His meal comprised lentils, vegetable, and chapattis. He would eat his dinner while listening to me. He trusted me fully, we usually thought alike. He never tried to lecture, and instead responded with well-thought and succinct answers. He remained brave during those difficult times, and never exhibited any trace of fear.

Nehru was Patel's opposite. He was cultured and elegant. He clearly comprehended the social sciences, so he could locate his politics in the larger framework of world history. He was the only Congress leader who had the ability to feel for art. He adored beauty — all the beautiful women of Delhi would attend parties in his house, which would be simply decorated by his lovely daughter, Indira. Nehru was an honest man with a clear mind. Since he was honest, he often tended to believe that others were too. He could not understand how selfish people could deceive honest ones. So, he could not decipher or judge people appropriately, deceitful people would often take advantage of him. He would become scared in crowds, worried by stories of back-stabbers.

During the riots of Delhi, all of us, and especially I and Patel were under immense pressure. But we kept our minds peaceful, and refused to give in.

I did not know Maulana Abul Kalam personally, I had only seen him from afar. He was a thin, sharp-nosed man, and had a small beard and a few hairs on his head. He was a magnanimous person and was fond of whisky.

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He believed in 'Hindustaniat', but because Partition had happened in the name of religion, he now had little influence over the Muslims. He would talk to Nehru about Partition, "Dear friend, we cannot go to Pakistan or live in India. Tell me, where should we go?" When the whole nation was rent by religious fervour, Maulana was the only man walking on the path of truth. So, I deeply respect him in spite of whatever he wrote about me.

The Vice-Chancellor of Jamia Milia Islamia, Dr. Zakir Hussain, was the best leader among the Muslims. We used to meet quite frequently; I deeply respected him. His artists were beautifying the high school of Najafgarh with paintings; it was at that time that I planned a tree-plantation drive in Jamia. During riots, I helped them escape from the attacks of Hindu Gujjars.

## Chapter 25

### **Division of Punjab and Punjabi Leaders**

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Some say that the country should not have been divided. While the division was right in principle, the circumstances of its conduct were vastly different in reality. Except for a wise few who were more tolerant, ordinary Hindus and Muslims bitterly hated each other. This hatred also had economic reasons. Muslims were backward in the areas of education and industry as compared to Hindus,<sup>159</sup> very few of them were employed in government jobs. They believed that if they would not get a nation of their own, they would be enslaved by the Hindus. So, they were in favour of the division. Naming their share of territory ‘Pakistan’ implied that it would have no space for kafirs; only Muslims would live there, and it would be based on Islamic rule. Keeping all these factors in mind, it was certain that populations would be exchanged as soon as we became independent. However, this Partition was considered a temporary exchange by many Congress leaders, and especially by Nehru; they believed that economic conditions would unite both countries soon.

Sikhs were strongly conflicted; it became difficult for them to decide. Sikhs and Hindus share more commonalities, often there are Hindu and Sikh members within the same family. If given a choice, a Sikh would support a Hindu over a Muslim. This meant that the Sikhs did not have a place in Pakistan, Hindustan was to be their home.

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The gurdwaras and lands of the Sikhs were in the forests of Punjab. They lay right in the middle of Punjab, and the Muslims wanted to claim that portion as part of Pakistan.

I deeply thought about this problem while I was in Delhi and understood that the division of the country was inevitable — the Sikh leaders needed to decide how Punjab would be divided between India and Pakistan.

I had previously observed that all work had come to a standstill in the secretariat of the Government of India, during the period of the Interim Government, which was composed of ministers from both the Congress and the Muslim League. Nary a file would move from one table to the next. The government had been divided into two camps — the Congress camp and the Muslim League camp. The Congress camp was composed of Hindu and Sikh employees, while the Muslim employees were part of the Muslim League camp. Hindu-Muslim riots had broken out in other cities, and many workplaces had shut down.<sup>160</sup>

There were a few Sikh leaders who wanted their own country named ‘Sikhistan’, but Sikhs were divided into three prominent castes. The first caste was that of the Jatts who are proficient agriculturists and brave warriors. Large numbers of Jatts were employed in the police and the army —they were the caretakers of the country. The second caste was the Ramgarhia

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<sup>159</sup> Also says, ‘Industry’ in the Punjabi original, with the English word in Gurmukhi script.

<sup>160</sup> Here, he refers to the shutting down of work and work-places; work not in a general sense, but in terms of people performing certain occupations halting the performance of their jobs/services.

caste who are born as gifted engineers and have expertise in manufacturing machines and tools for agriculture. The third were the *Khatri* and the Arora caste — they are skilled in the management of business and industry. All these three castes were spread across India — it would be counter-productive to confine these hard-working and brave people in a cage called ‘Sikhistan’. Baldev Singh, a prominent leader of the Sikhs, had his own factory in Tata Nagar, so he judged Sikhistan to not be in the Sikh interest.

It was now clear that Punjab was to be divided. Giani Kartar Singh came to meet me in January 1947. Giani was ugly. His face was full of chicken-pox scars, his eyes were bloodshot with drink — he was a lost man. He was wearing a worn-out blue turban, a thick khadi pyjama, and a Pattu silk coat. Although he was ugly to look at, he had a sharp intellect, and his mind was clear and alert. He would talk with conviction and had a well-structured thought process. After my ruminations about the division of Punjab, I advised him to ask for division till the river Ravi. If they were pressurised against this claim, they could give Lahore to the Muslims. With this boundary that I had envisioned, the area of Montgomery would fall in India,<sup>161</sup> and the Sikh farmers and landowners residing there would not lose their lives and livelihoods.

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Giani liked this proposal; I handed him a pamphlet about the proposal composed in English, along with a map reflecting it. He got it published under his own name, and Sardar Ranjit Singh bore the expenses of publishing it. This pamphlet was distributed amongst the Congress leaders, especially those who occupied the higher rungs in the party hierarchy. This clearly indicated that the Sikhs had finalised their decision, they had made up their minds. This was another reason why I had so much sympathy for Punjabi refugees — I was part of the decision about Partition, so I felt the moral responsibility of offering the utmost support to those who had been uprooted from Pakistan.

Secondly, I observed that the Congress leaders could not understand the problem of Punjab and had no sympathy for Punjabi refugees. The primary reason for this apathy was that these leaders belonged to the United Provinces, Bombay, and South India — they did not suffer because of Partition. Some Punjabi Hindus came to Nehru to ask for 500 acres of land around 7 km away from Delhi to develop their own township. Nehru responded, “Not 7 km, but 700 km away.”

The Punjabi leadership was insignificant and weak. Lala Bihari Lal Channa was the President of the Punjabi Byapar Mandal.<sup>162</sup> He used to trail Nehru, Patel, and Pant. Patel and Pant asked me about him and mocked him. Channa was a thin, weak man, with pallor on his face. I think that it is impossible for a shopkeeper to become a leader, because leaders cannot muse about profit or loss. I recall Chotu Ram’s joke about this. While on his deathbed, a Lala ji was asked, “Where do you want to go — to heaven, or to hell?” He responded, “Send me where it is more profitable.” If a Lala ji fell ill and he were asked how much better he felt than

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<sup>161</sup> Montgomery, Pakistan, has been renamed Sahiwal. Many Hindu and Sikh refugees escaped from the bloody riots there during Partition, and migrated to North India.

<sup>162</sup> *Lit.*, Punjabi Trade Society.

before, he would answer: 2 Paisa better. Whether hale and hearty, or sick, they think in terms of money.

I never had the opportunity to meet Master Tara Singh, but it was clear from his speeches that he was a man prone to sentiment.

Amongst the leaders of the Punjab Congress, Swaran Singh was the most intelligent thinker. He had been my classmate in Government College Lahore.

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He would think about every problem very calmly, and never take impulsive decisions. This was the reason for his success. He is the only minister who has continuously held a ministerial position from independence for so long [with the Government of Punjab, earlier, and later with the Government of India]. Swaran Singh was not sentimental. I never saw him getting furious or expressing intense affection. I think that if Tara Singh and Swaran Singh were mixed together, we would get a perfect specimen of humankind.

Dr. Gopi Chand Bhargav, a staunch supporter of Gandhi, was a very warm person. He believed in subsisting on khadi, Ghani oil and mill-flour. Nehru was jealous of him because he was friendly with Patel. He was very hard-working, and he would prepare for every meeting by reading the required documents. But he did not have any knowledge or understanding of modern science, or our changing world; he lacked dynamism. Swaran Singh once told me that he had stubborn, unverified views.<sup>163</sup>

No one even knew the name of Partap Singh Kairon. He was an unknown leader. General Mohan Singh was very brave, and perhaps the most spirited amongst the youth leaders. He had sound organisational skills and enjoyed popularity among the youth. He was so enthusiastic that those who visited him would also get infused with vigour and enthusiasm.

Bhim Sen Sachar was a staunch Arya Samaji, and so the Sikhs did not trust him. He would dress in clean clothes — wear an ironed achkan, churidar pyjama, and Gandhi cap. He was very arrogant and did not know how to convince his colleagues and subordinates to work for him. He had the habit of making enemies of everyone he met. He would keep glancing at his watch and fight with visitors even if they were only two minutes late for an appointment with him. Sachar was close to Maulana and Nehru, but Patel did not like him.

During the days of Punjab's misfortune, many of these leaders would travel to Delhi and attend meetings of the Committee headed by Rajendra Prasad, which had been established for discussing the issue of the rehabilitation of refugees of Punjab. I observed that during these meetings, no one other than Lala Mehar Chand Khanna from the Frontier Province, would talk honestly or bravely. I often had to take the lead and present the real scenario of Punjab, and Punjabis' suffering. Looking at this group of sycophants would fill my heart with hatred.

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<sup>163</sup> The idiom used in the original is 'Mehn di Dhad', which means ignorance/stupidity.

Chapter 26  
**The Great Sacrifice**  
 (1948)

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Mahatma Gandhi came to Delhi in July 1947. He began living in Bhangi Colony because he truly sympathised with the poorest of India. I had organised a tree plantation week during that month and had requested Gandhi ji to come to Delhi jail, distribute sweets among prisoners and plant a mango tree there. He accepted my request and came to the jail with Dr. Sushila Nayyar and Brij Krishan Chandiwale. He shared sweets with the prisoners and led a prayer meeting with them in the evening. He followed that by asking for donations. I had a cheque of Rs. 500 in my pocket, which I handed over to him. He responded, “Look at the grace of God — you ask for 5 Rupees and get 500 Rupees!”

In January 1948, Mahatma ji went on a fast because of the disruption of peace caused by the influx of refugees from Punjab and the Frontier into Delhi. At that time, he had shifted out of Bhangi Colony and was living in Birla House. The Government of India agreed to give 55 crore Rupees to Pakistan, because of Gandhiji’s insistent fast. This angered the refugees. They assembled in front of Birla House and shouted, “Let Gandhi die.” I was surprised to see how a person who had tried to sacrifice his life for the freedom of the country was being treated this way.

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During those days, differences emerged between Gandhi and Patel. The Muslim leaders, particularly Azad, Khalil-ul-Rehman and Ahmed Sayeed believed that the houses vacated by Muslims in Muslim mohallas should not be allotted to refugees. Patel did not agree. Patel asked me to meet Mahatma Gandhi, because Muslims used to tell tales to Gandhiji about me, saying that the Delhi administration was biased against Muslims. I went to meet Gandhiji at Birla House, as asked by Patel. Mahatma ji was lying under the sun on a cot in the lawn; he was wearing a woollen cap. I greeted him and sat on a chair in front of him.

Mahatma ji began, “I know Mr. Randhawa works very hard, and that the Chief Commissioner stays drunk and sleeps throughout the day. The Muslims used to trust you before, but why not now?”

I replied, “This is a result of your political decisions. Before the riots broke out, I had instituted Punjabi Muslims as magistrates and policemen. When Hindu goons would trouble Muslims in Hindu-majority areas, I would deploy Muslim policemen and officers to control those goons and send Hindu and Sikh officers to Muslim areas to catch Muslim rioters. Now, ever since you agreed to the Partition of the country, the Muslim policemen and officers have left for Pakistan and the administrative balance which I had ensured has been disrupted. Secondly, 7 lakh Hindu and Sikh refugees have arrived in Delhi, they have neither houses nor shops. It will be very difficult to ensure peace here till the refugees have been rehabilitated.”

Maulana Ahmed Sayeed and Maulana Khalil-ul-Rehman were also sitting next to me. I had issued them revolvers from the warehouse for their personal safety. I continued, “Ask

these Maulana Sahibs, when have I not acted on their request? If Muslims are unsafe, it is because of the political decision of Partition, which you agreed to. The entire population of Hindus and Sikhs from Pakistan has shifted to Northern Punjab and Delhi. I believe that helping them is also my duty.”

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The Maulanas responded, “We must vacate the mosques which have been occupied by refugees. Muslim areas, especially those of Jama Masjid, Fatehpuri and Ballimaran, where refugees have occupied houses, should also be vacated.”

I agreed, “The mosques can be vacated after a few months when the refugees have been allotted houses. If any action to vacate Muslim properties of refugees is undertaken right now, riots will break out again.”

After this conversation ended, I asked Mahatma ji to inaugurate the new panchayat-ghar in Daulatpur village near the Delhi-Gurgaon road near Palam, which I had gotten constructed with the support of the villagers.

Mahatma ji agreed, and I took him to the village the next day. He performed his prayer meeting there. This pleased me. At that time, no one in the Delhi administration knew that some people were plotting to kill Mahatma ji. After Gandhiji’s assassination, I later realized that I was fortunate that he was not murdered when I had taken him to inaugurate the panchayat-ghar, because I would have been held responsible for his assassination on my watch, in that case.

Someone threw a bomb during Gandhiji’s evening prayer meeting on 20 January 1948. While the bomb blew apart the walls, no one was hurt. Gandhiji remained calm and resumed his prayer meeting.

Wazir Chand Mehra, the Inspector General of Police, suggested that all the participants of the prayer meetings should be searched first and then allowed to assemble. Mahatma ji refused this search for the attendees.

I became sick because of overwork. I was resting on my bed when someone called in the evening and informed me that Gandhiji had been shot. I became dazed upon hearing that. I could have never imagined that anyone could have attacked Gandhiji that way. Indians worshipped him as a deity. Delhi was enveloped by commotion. The Muslims and Sikhs were terrified that they would be threatened if the killer belonged to their religious communities. When it was revealed that the assassin was a Maharashtrian Hindu, both the communities breathed a sigh of relief.

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I hurried to Birla House even though I had fever. Nehru, Patel, and other leaders had reached before me. Mahatma ji’s corpse was covered with khadi cloth and was kept on the floor. Extreme sorrow saturated the air of that room.

I went to see his assassin in the evening. His name was Godse, and he was a Maharashtrian Brahmin from Poona. He was a thin man with gleaming eyes. He exhibited no remorse for his actions and kept speaking constantly. He seemed intoxicated.



Next morning, on 31 January, Gandhiji's bier was taken to Raj Ghat.<sup>164</sup> Lakhs of men and women had gathered for the funeral procession. The funeral ground was near the power station of Delhi; lakhs of people had gathered there. The employees of the Delhi administration and Patel were most strongly affected by the people's tragedy. When the funeral pyre was lit, the crowd pushed in from all directions. It broke the cordon set up by the Air Force, and it felt like the leaders near the pyre — Nehru, Patel, Maulana, Mountbatten and the others, would also be swept into the fire. I and some other constables were sitting on horses. We pushed the crowd back with great difficulty and rescued the leaders.

The Chief Minister of Bombay, B.G. Kher, had already informed Patel that some Marathas had been planning to kill Gandhiji. I do not know why Patel did not call a meeting of the Delhi administration to enable us to prepare to protect him. If we had been called and informed about the plot before time, we would have taken the appropriate steps — not let anybody enter Gandhiji's prayer meeting without being searched, irrespective of Gandhiji's feelings about the search. If this precaution had been taken in time, Gandhiji would not have been assassinated in Delhi, or anywhere else.

I want to mention here that the Resident Magistrate of Delhi, Atam Prakash Bagai, did not even inspect the site of the bomb-blast at Birla House, even though Birla House lay within his territorial jurisdiction. He reduced his work to simply hearing cases and did not govern his territory properly.

Now Patel suppressed the Jana Sangh. The Delhi administration received orders to arrest members of the Jana Sangh. We arrested hundreds of Jansanghis<sup>165</sup>. Many of them were office clerks. Some schoolboys and college students were also arrested. When the prison was filled to full capacity, it was decided that we would let out those who would apologise and promise to leave the Jana Sangh. I got many apology letters cyclostyled and took the bundle of papers to the prison.

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It was announced that whosoever would apologise would be let out; the forms were distributed amongst the prisoners. They took the forms, took some time to think about their response, and then returned them — they refused to apologise.

The refugees were shocked by the sacrifice of the Mahatma. Now, the Government of India became less sympathetic towards them, especially with the loss of an important interlocutor for the refugees. The Jansanghis who celebrated the Mahatma's assassination by distributing sweets also calmed down. The fire of hatred had been doused by the sacrifice of the Mahatma.

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<sup>164</sup> Today a memorial dedicated to Mahatma Gandhi, Raj Ghat is the new name for the historical steps leading into the Yamuna as part of Shahjahanabad (the city space of Delhi developed by Shahjahan). It is loosely translated as 'King's Bank'. An eternal flame burns at one end in his memory.

<sup>165</sup> Lit., Those belonging to the Jana Sangh.

## Chapter 27

### **Independence and the Uprooting of Punjabis**

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On the Saturday morning of 16 August 1947, Nehru hoisted the tricolour of independent India from the ramparts of the Red Fort. I was part of a special ceremony during the hoisting. The garrison engineer of the Red Fort, Kulwant Singh, had arranged for the flag and I was the President of the Red Fort Committee. Prior to the final flag hoisting, many rehearsals of the hoisting were conducted two to three days before the chosen date. During these sessions, we often encountered difficulty in easily opening the flag and hoisting it. When Nehru held the rope of the flag, Kulwant Singh and I nervously looked on, hoping that no bad omen kept the flag from rising properly. When the flag reached the top, the sky resounded with thunderous applause. There were five lakh people in the ground before us, the white domes of the Jama Masjid lay behind the sea of their heads, all clearly visible against a bright blue sky.

The independence of our country made us joyful. Rajendra Prasad and Patel stood beside me. Bibi Shano Devi was standing behind me. With tears in her eyes, she told me, “Brother, you are celebrating while Punjab is burning. We had not known about Punjab’s suffering until now.”

Violence had broken out in Punjab from March 1947 onwards. Hindus and Sikhs from Balochistan and the Frontier had begun coming to Delhi since March-April.

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In March 1947, riots broke out in Rawalpindi — 2000 Sikhs were killed, and women and girls jumped into wells to protect their honour. Scared of similar attacks, many Pothoharis left Pothohar to arrive in Delhi in April 1947. Their food and stay were arranged for in Gurdwara Bangla Sahib. Sardar Mohan Singh (the owner of the Oriental Furniture Company) helped me with this arrangement. Since these refugees had left Pakistan well in time, they were able to bring their money, gold, and other valuables along. However, very few of the remaining Punjabis could leave Pakistan in time. The Radcliffe Award was announced in the afternoon of 16 August. Radcliffe had already left for England because he knew that his Award would leave no one satisfied. The Sikhs were the worst affected by the Award. They had ploughed the barren and forested lands of Lyallpur, Sargodha, and Montgomery; they had cleared the forests there, levelled the uneven land, and set up irrigation systems. They had developed orchards of malta fruit in places which previously used to be barren, and full of sand dunes. They were now robbed of the land of their ancestors, their hard labour on those lands would no longer come to fruition. Even their holiest site, the site of the birth of the founder of Sikhism, Guru Nanak Dev ji, had been left in Pakistan.

Lahore was the centre of the Hindu middle class. They had their colleges, schools and other institutes, and houses, bungalows, and shops there. The wealth of the Hindus was taken over by the Muslims, just like a beehive full of honey is captured by the one who hunts it.

By 6 September, 5 lakh refugees had reached Delhi. The shopkeepers among them began working by selling goods on stalls parked across the shops of Baniyas in Chandni

Chowk, Khari Baoli, and other markets. The Bhapas of Rawalpindi began running food kiosks in Chandni Chowk and began selling kebabs and keema. The Baniya shopkeepers of Delhi hated non-vegetarian food, and so they complained about the refugees to Mahatma Gandhi. In reality, however, they were more troubled by the competition they encountered due to these small vendors, than they were by the ‘non-vegetarian food’. They believed that I had invited the refugees to Delhi. So, those Baniyas who had previously maintained good relations with me, went against me and spread the false propaganda that I was being partial to the Punjabis.

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Home Secretary Bannerjee, incensed by these complaints, called me to his office and blamed me for helping the Punjabis.<sup>166</sup> I replied, “I help these Punjabis because they have been displaced, and not because they are Punjabis. It is every Indian’s duty to help refugees.” I then asked myself — how many Indians rise above the narrow bounds of state, religion, and caste, and help the other? If a Bengali or Madrasi<sup>167</sup> officer oversees an office of the Indian Government, he begins filling his office with Bengalis or Madrasis. This trend was evident at all levels of the hierarchy till the top — even Nehru was surrounded by Kashmiri Brahmins.

The situation in Delhi kept deteriorating till 7 September 1947. It went beyond the control of the local administration. There were bouts of firing in Sabzi Mandi from the Muslim houses. Paharganj, which used to be the locality of Muslim labourers who used to lift heavy sacks, became the centre of riots.

I observed that the Jansanghis and Sikhs were causing more damage and destruction, while Muslims were often on the receiving end of that violence. I ordered the Sikhs who carried long daggers<sup>168</sup> and swords to remain unarmed. Till that time, we were not in favour of banning *kirpans* because they were an important religious symbol for the Sikhs, and because the Muslims had been attacking the Sikhs prior to the Sikhs seeking revenge. This was, in fact, a slogan of the Muslim League: “Kill the Sikh and loot the Hindu.” However, now, the situation had changed — the Sikhs had become the aggressors, and Muslims became the victims.

A meeting was held with respect to the issue of the kirpan; it was attended by Nehru, Patel, Maulana Azad and Baldev Singh. Baldev Singh took me aside and said, “The kirpan should not be banned; it is a Sikh’s religious symbol.” I replied, “It should be banned for now because the Sikhs are attacking Muslims.” Baldev Singh repeated himself. I told him that I had given him my final advice and that it was now his decision to make and suggest to Nehru and Patel. In the meeting, however, Baldev Singh did not dare to share his views. He lost respect in my eyes after that meeting.

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<sup>166</sup> Here, the allegation is that of him being biased towards the Punjabi refugees, as opposed to the native inhabitants of Delhi, though who is ‘native’ to Delhi is another difficult question because Delhi has been home to circulating populations throughout history.

<sup>167</sup> Or Tamil, with Madras being a former province under British governance, and the people from Madras being commonly called *Madrasi* (also used as an insult, though not here), despite having different regional, linguistic and cultural allegiances.

<sup>168</sup> Here, *kirpan*, a double-edged dagger carrying religious significance for a Sikh.

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I observed that during difficult situations, Baldev Singh would turn cowardly. He was just a wrestler on paper. If he had shown any courage or determination then, district Montgomery, which had a Sikh population of 10 lakh living with two and-a-half lakh Muslims, along with Nankana Sahib, would have been a part of India.<sup>169</sup> Even the Governor of Punjab, Jenkins, was in favour of this.

In the end, it was decided that kirpans would be banned; I ordered the police to take away kirpans being carried by anyone.

The Government of India established the Delhi Emergency Committee on 11 September 1947. The Minister of Commerce, C.H. Bhabha, was its Chairman, while Cabinet Secretary H.M. Patel became its Secretary. I and Chief Commissioner Khurshid were members of this Committee. Other than us, H.B. Lal, and other Secretaries of the Government of India were also its members. This Committee had been assigned the responsibility of the management of Delhi.

Jansanghis were stabbing Muslims at the railway stations. I noticed that the police were not taking any action against this lawlessness. The attackers would hide their knives in the garden hedges of the Municipal Committee after stabbing Muslims. I had all the hedges removed. This helped to reduce the stabbing incidents. Then, I took two bodyguards and went to the railway station where I saw a Jansanghi stabbing a Muslim. My bodyguards and I fired at the attacker, who was killed as a result. We quickly brought the vulnerable Muslim who had been attacked to the Municipal Committee (which also doubled as the headquarters of the Emergency Committee) in our jeep, and that is how we saved his life.

The Muslims of Delhi were taking refuge in the Old Fort. One day, I was patrolling Karol Bagh. The Station House Officer of that area, Jagan Nath, was a Jansanghi, and he actively worked to remove the Muslims from that area. I went to meet Dr. Joshi, an ophthalmologist, and advised him to not leave for home in the dark because it was unsafe. He became careless and died of Dr. Qureishi's firing. Another incident about that patrolling comes to my mind. I had gone to meet a nationalist Muslim family who I knew very well. The Begum was a cultured woman who did not agree with the ideology of the Muslim League. I advised her to not trust anyone because the situation had changed.

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She accepted my advice, collected her money and jewellery, and sat in my car with her daughters. I took her to a safe destination.

Delhi erupted in chaos. Trains full of people came to Delhi from West Punjab. The Delhi administration had around thirty trucks which were used to carry manure. I ordered the truck drivers to pick up refugees from the railway station and help them reach the barracks of Kingsway. This is how thousands of homeless refugees were given places to stay. Then, Lala

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<sup>169</sup> Nankana Sahib is the site of the birth of Guru Nanak, the first Sikh Guru. This historic gurdwara has been linked with Dera Baba Nanak in Gurdaspur, India, in recent times via the Kartarpur Corridor.

Ram Niwas cooperated by collecting quilts and distributing them amongst refugees. He was the manager of Birla Cloth Mill.

There were spacious bungalows in the Civil Lines of Delhi which also had servant quarters. I ordered all the owners to give refuge to the displaced homeless in those quarters. This is how many refugees were given homes for the time being.

Secretary Kripalani from the Ministry of Rehabilitation called me up and informed me that around 20,000 Punjabis were unable to cross the banks of the Ravi river. They had been hungry for many days. Food needed to be arranged for them urgently. During that time, a wave of *Punjabi-ness* bonded the different Punjabis of Delhi together.<sup>170</sup> I asked my wife Iqbal Kaur to take sacks of wheat flour to Gurdwara Sis Ganj. I also appealed to the women of Delhi to take wheat flour to the Gurdwara for the starving refugees on the banks of the Ravi, over radio. Hundreds of women reached the Gurdwara to donate flour for the refugees and began making large numbers of chapattis. The Bhapas of Rawalpindi brought many cans of mango pickle and the next day, we loaded chapattis and mango pickle into the airplane early in the morning, so that the food could be taken to the hungry refugees. This is how helpless Punjabis were provided with food. I met some of those refugees in Jalandhar, and they informed me that that government action had saved countless lives and encouraged the refugees to not lose hope.

One evening, Nehru and Trilok Singh visited the Kingsway Barracks with me. On meeting them, one Bhapa said, “We do not want to sit idle in these camps. I am a school-teacher, let me work as one.” Nehru did not respond. I argued his case, saying that these refugees should be provided with whichever jobs were available. Those Punjabis were hard-working people and they did not want to live on the state’s charity.<sup>171</sup> Nehru established the Ministry of Rehabilitation after that.

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I knew that the government would formulate its own schemes for rehabilitation, but that I should not stop helping refugees in whatever way I could. Five hundred permits were to be issued for trucks and taxis. I found that many clerks were indulging in corruption and red-tapeism in issuing these permits. I devised a new method of issuing permits. There were 2000 candidates for the permits. I asked them to stand in two separate lines composed of the locals and the refugees. There were around 1000 locals, who I asked to leave because the permits were for the refugees. They left, murmuring their dissatisfaction. Then I approached the refugees and asked those who had prior experience of driving vehicles to stay back, while the rest could leave. Around a hundred of them remained — their papers were checked, and permits were given to them. I would like to mention here that H.P. Nanda, the owner of Escort Tractors, was given permits for two taxis by me and he was able to build an empire with the help of this small business. I salute these Punjabis who did not lose heart and rebuilt big businesses with their skill and enterprise from scratch. Life began easing in Delhi.

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<sup>170</sup> *Punjabi-ness* here refers to Punjabi we-feeling.

<sup>171</sup> The word used here is *haramkhor*, which is an insult/abuse, and implies living off of funds not earned by one’s own effort, or on funds gained through dubious means.

The Partition of the country and the creation of Pakistan did not only cause the Punjabis of West Punjab to shift to East Punjab and Delhi, but the border areas of Amritsar and other villages began stirring up. Sardar Gurbaksh Singh and his Preet-soldiers came to Delhi from Preet Nagar. I helped him get a bungalow from an honest man, Lala Girdhari Lal from Mehrauli, and he began publishing *Preetlari* from Delhi.<sup>172</sup> Sardar Gurbaksh Singh was great company during those dangerous days. I was very fond of him, and I still recall the time I spent with him.

I helped Sardar Pritam Singh to get a shop in the new market of Chandni Chowk, with the area being renamed Pleasure Garden Market; he started a printing press there. This was a historical incident because the high standard of publishing in the Punjabi language achieved by Sardar Pritam Singh was previously absent, this marked a new milestone in Punjabi literature.

The famous poets and writers of Lahore came to Delhi, and Delhi thus became a cultural centre of Punjabi.

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<sup>172</sup> Gurbaksh Singh was a Punjabi novelist and short-story writer. Preet Nagar, equidistant from Lahore and Amritsar, was a township he established, which drew in artists, writers and poets of the time (like Balraj Sahni, Sahir Ludhianvi, Amrita Pritam, Sobha Singh etc.). *Preetlari* was a journal of philosophy, creative writing and discussion which he started; it is run till date by his descendants. Preet Nagar was badly affected during the Partition riots because of its location, causing its creative community to be displaced.

## Chapter 28 **The Leaders of Delhi and Riots**

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The national level leaders — Nehru, Patel, Maulana Azad and Rajendra Prasad, stood high on the rungs of leadership. On the other hand, the leaders of Delhi lacked leadership traits — they were as low in this hierarchy of leadership, as the national leaders were high. These two groups were as different as the earth and sky.<sup>173</sup>

The most cunning of these Congress leaders was a Baniya who dreamt of becoming the Chief Minister of Delhi.<sup>174</sup> He sympathised with the Jana Sangh on one side and remained friendly with Maulana Azad and Nehru on the other. The Jana Sangh decided to set up a camp on the banks of the Yamuna. I was certain that the communal situation in Delhi would worsen if this camp were allowed to be set up. A Congress Lala ji came to me to advocate for the Jana Sangh.<sup>175</sup> I explicitly told him that no permission would be given for that camp and that if this order were disobeyed, they would have to face arrests. The organisers of the event cancelled it.

While on the one hand, this Lala ji would act as my sycophant, on the other, he would tell tales about my shortcomings to Nehru and Maulana. Once a Baniya from Delhi came to ask me for a licence for a revolver, with the Lala ji's recommendation for him written on a piece of paper. I read that recommendation, returned it to him and asked him to return to Lala ji. Lala ji came to meet me in the evening. I began, "See, Lala ji, you have to be clear about whether you are a friend or enemy — if you are a foe, then stop sending me these recommendations. If you deem yourself a friend, then set the record straight, and stop making false complaints about me." Lala ji was taken aback by my directness; he left after announcing his admiration for me.

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When I had shifted from Delhi to Ambala in 1948, I read a newspaper headline about the Lala ji: the man who had been spinning a spider's web to occupy the seat of the Chief Minister of Delhi for many years, died before his plans could be fulfilled — he died in an air crash at Calcutta Airport. God acts in his own time but delivers fine judgement.<sup>176</sup>

I had two very good friends among the Muslim leaders of Delhi — Sayyed Aziz Hussain Bakai, and Mir Mushtaq Ahmed. Bakai was the editor of a newspaper named *Hurriyat*; he lived near Jama Masjid. He was a staunch nationalist, and constantly disagreed with Muslim

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<sup>173</sup> Idiom: *Zameen Aasman Da Farak*: Having a world of difference.

<sup>174</sup> Randhawa refers to people of different communities by their caste names, a practice which is changing today.

<sup>175</sup> *Lala* can be considered equivalent to 'Mr.' in address today. It was originally used to refer to Hindu traders and shopkeepers in Northern India.

<sup>176</sup> "*Rabb di chakki chaldi der naal hai, par peehndi (grinds) bareek hai*", Idiom, lit., God's grinding stone turns slowly, but grinds very well.

League members.<sup>177</sup> Bakai felt that the demand of the Muslim League for Pakistan would be counter-productive for the Muslims living in India. He published a special edition of *Hurriyat* named 'Galinama', where he criticised Jinnah and other Muslim League leaders. This infuriated the members of the Muslim League living in his vicinity — they attacked his office. Sensing this impending danger, I had issued him a licence for a revolver, which he always kept on his person.

Bakai Sahib also helped as a Pir in the Dargah 'Hazrat Baki Billa'. An expert on Mughlai cuisine, he wrote a book about it in Urdu. He was especially gifted in cooking Pulao, Biryani and 'Shahi Meetha Tukda'.<sup>178</sup> When I was transferred to Ambala, he came to meet me, cooked all these dishes for me and also taught my wife Iqbal Kaur the recipes for them.

I had appointed Bakai and Mir Mushtaq Ahmed as Special Magistrates in the Jama Masjid and Ballimaran areas during the riots; they dedicatedly worked for peace there. When I was transferred out of Delhi, they printed Urdu posters praising me. These two friends stood by my side during thick and thin, while the Baniya Congress leaders were opposed to me because they had realized that they could not manipulate me.

Mir Mushtaq Ahmed was a Kashmiri with a fair, smiling face. He had been a schoolteacher and a member of the Socialist Party, before he began his political career. He even helped the refugees during the riots.

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He would always be accompanied by three or four Sikh refugee boys. Once, one of the boys was playing with his loaded pistol — he accidentally shot himself in the stomach and died. Mir Sahib and his other companions who were eyewitnesses to that incident came to me and informed me about it. They were afraid that the police would register a false case against him. I immediately rang up the area Inspector and instructed him that it was an accident and nobody's fault would be registered in the case. So, no false case was registered, and the case was cleared. I do not need to mention that Mir Sahib was grateful for my intervention. He became the Executive Councillor of Delhi in 1966.<sup>179</sup>

Mir Sahib, Lachhman Singh Gill, and the Editor of *Riyasat* Sardar Diwan Singh Maftoon were among my close friends. Gill Sahib was a contractor. I greatly respected him for his honesty — he would never bribe the staff of the Central Works Department and would instead loom over them to get his bills cleared.

Maftoon Sahib's name will always gleam in gold letters in the field of Urdu journalism. He courageously revealed the truths of the atrocities of the Kings and Nawabs of the princely states. I regularly read his weekly newspaper *Riyasat*. He would also publish Urdu translations of Hindi poems by Bihari, Padmakar, Keshav Das, and others. This is how he built bridges

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<sup>177</sup> Nationalist here implies one who Randhawa considers 'patriotic'— an advocate for an unpartitioned India.

<sup>178</sup> Pulao and Biryani are spiced rice dishes, while Shahi Tukda/Shahi Meetha Tukda is a rich dessert.

<sup>179</sup> See

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Socialist\\_Part\\_candidate,\\_Mir\\_Mushtaq\\_Ahmed,\\_canvassing\\_votes\\_for\\_himself\\_before\\_a\\_crowd\\_near\\_Jama\\_Masjid,\\_Delhi\\_\(1952\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Socialist_Part_candidate,_Mir_Mushtaq_Ahmed,_canvassing_votes_for_himself_before_a_crowd_near_Jama_Masjid,_Delhi_(1952).jpg) for a photograph of Ahmed canvassing.



between Hindi and Urdu literature. I began enjoying the delicacy and beauty of Hindi poetry through *Riyasat*. When his newspaper shut down in 1960, I motivated him to publish a book of ‘Dohae’ and their translation.<sup>180</sup> He named this book *Jazbaat-e-Mashriq*. I helped him sell his book. He began living in Rajpur, Dehra Dun after retirement. He was surviving on a meagre literary pension of Rs. 200, granted by the Government of India. He spent his old age in poverty. He frequently wrote about my days in Delhi and criticized the ‘Baniya-shahi’ of Congress leaders, especially of Desh Bandhu Gupta.<sup>181</sup>

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<sup>180</sup> A *Doha* (plural ‘*Dohae*’) is a poetic composition which is a couplet, complete in itself. The philosopher-poets Kabir and Tulsidas are well-known composers of Dohas, typically a North Indian verse form.

<sup>181</sup> He finally names Gupta as his sycophant/enemy here. Baniya-shahi refers to the dominance of the Delhi Congress by men of the Baniya caste.

Chapter 29  
**The Resettlement of Uprooted Punjabis**  
**Jalandhar**  
 (1949-1951)

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I left Delhi and returned to Punjab in October 1948. Dr. Gopi Chand Bhargav was the Chief Minister of Punjab at that time. I met him at Simla, which was the capital of Punjab then. Dr. Bhargav was a gracious man. He met me very warmly and asked me where I would like to get posted to. He believed that I would want to work as the Secretary of the Punjab Government. I had a bitter experience of living in the hills from my time serving in Almora. It is good to tour the hills as a tourist but living there for a longer period is difficult. One feels like one is living in a prison after residing there for about two months. I told him, “Give me a posting in any district in the plains.” He appointed me as the Deputy Commissioner of Ambala. The people of Ambala were surprised that I had chosen Ambala over Delhi. The residence of the Deputy Commissioner of Ambala was spacious, but the city was extremely dull and dirty.

After arriving there, I observed that the refugees of the city were very restless. Nukal Sen had been the Deputy Commissioner before me. The State had extended large grants and funds to the refugees, but the refugees were not spending these grants, just like a snake sits on its gems.<sup>182</sup> I distributed credit amongst the refugees, and they became engaged in different occupations.

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I met Jaswant Rai, the Principal of Gandhi National Memorial College, during this time. He was an upright man and would suggest solutions for the problems of refugees. Wadhawa Ram was the Principal of Sanatan Dharam College. Once, a play was organised in his college, which I saw. I noticed a young man with very good acting skills performing in it. His name was Bhag Singh, and I later recruited him in the Lok Sampark Vibhag of the Punjab Government.<sup>183</sup> He proved to be a great actor later, and established a name for himself in the acting circles of Punjab. Sobha Singh, the famous artist, came to meet me in March 1949. He had first gone to Delhi after being displaced from Lahore because of Partition. I had been unable to help him much in Delhi. When he came to meet me in Ambala, I invited him to stay with us. He lived with us for some time, and also organised an exhibition of his works in the Ambala Cantonment. I helped him sell many of his paintings. He was able to establish his house and studio in Andretta, an extremely beautiful village in Kangra, with the proceeds from this sale.

One day, I saw him kneading already smooth soil. I asked him why he was doing that. He said, “You have served Punjab and Punjabis whole-heartedly. So, I want to craft a statue of you.” He kept working on the statue for a few days. He completed it in ten days — he had captured the exact nuances of my face in that smooth soil! I had known Sobha Singh as a painter

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<sup>182</sup> See the myth of ‘Naag Mani’.

<sup>183</sup> Lok Sampark Vibhag, lit., the Department of Public Communication

and was surprised to know that he was a gifted sculptor as well. He took this statue to his house in Andretta. Sardar Gurcharan Singh, whose utensils of blue clay had carved out a name for him in artist circles, also lived in Andretta during the summer months.<sup>184</sup> He decided to strengthen the foundations of that statue after seeing it. He placed it in plaster to make copies of it. The plaster statue was grey in colour. Many hill women would visit Sobha Singh and consider that statue to be Lord Krishna's image. They would offer flowers to it.

Sri Joginder Singh Mann, the Minister of Rehabilitation in the Sachar Government, came to meet me in May 1949. He told me that they had a lot of work that only I could accomplish and asked me what I was doing in Ambala. I asked him, "What is this work about?"

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He replied, "The scheme of rehabilitating refugee farmers is in chaos, and the refugees are growing restless." At that time, Prem Nath Thapar was the Commissioner of the said scheme and Sardar Trilok Singh was the Director-General. Thapar Sahib was a very smart, experienced, and intelligent officer, and deeply understood the problems of the farmers. Trilok was an expert planner, but he was unfamiliar with rural life.

The implementation of the rehabilitation of refugees was so chaotic that it was exceedingly difficult to detangle. After pondering over the issue, I decided that that work should be completed quickly because the welfare of Punjab and the entire country hinged on it. I accepted the suggestion of Joginder Singh Mann, and the Government of Punjab appointed me as the Additional Director General of the Department of Rehabilitation. I packed my possessions and set off for Jalandhar.

I saw an area fenced with barbed wires, with thousands of refugees gathered outside. 7000 Patwaris and officials allotted them land from inside the fence. Tension hung in the air; the refugee farmers could not believe that the lands allotted to them for the time-being would be temporary, and that they would have to shift out again when the permanent allotments would be made.

After observing this, I decided that the refugees' complaints must be recorded and acted upon. For one week, I came to the office, sat under a straw roof, and recorded the refugees' pleas. I analysed these applications later and found that the Patwaris and Tehsildars were engaging in foul-play. One of the rules of the Department was that an allottee who had been allotted land as per his ascertained grade should not be shifted further, and his permanent allotment should be granted there and then. As per this scheme of allocation, the lands in West Punjab were substituted with equivalent lands in different districts of East Punjab and PEPSU. This way, the refugees would be sent to those districts where the Muslims had left their lands. The Sialkotis were allotted lands in Hoshiarpur, Sheikhpurias in Karnal and so on.<sup>185</sup> The

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<sup>184</sup> While Sobha Singh and Gurcharan Singh are no more, Andretta lives on as an idyllic artists' village. One can see Sobha Singh's paintings and prints in his house and studio, which have been converted into a gallery, and also buy copies of his prints from a gift store. Interestingly enough, Mohinder Singh Randhawa's bust continues to grace Singh's house-gallery. Gurcharan Singh's former studio today doubles as a pottery class for pottery enthusiasts, while many pieces of his blue pottery are displayed in cases in another exhibition hall.

<sup>185</sup> Lit., people of Sialkot and Sheikhpura, respectively.

people who had originally left Ludhiana, Jalandhar, Hoshiarpur, Amritsar and Gurdaspur for lands in West Punjab would be settled near their ancestral villages. Out of these settlers, the people of Amritsar had the most land; most of them had settled in Montgomery and Lyallpur districts and had cultivated the barren soil there to make it fertile.<sup>186</sup>

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I informed Thapar Sahib about the foul-play going on in the process of allotment; I told him about the need to listen to complaints and resolve them quickly. He and Trilok Singh feared that by listening to complaints and reviewing them, the allotment process would go haywire; they also feared that the 7000 Patwaris were jointly working in one location, so they may go on strike if we agreed to review complaints. Even one Patwari was difficult to control, and here we had thousands of them. After some rumination, the Punjab Government agreed to a grievance redressal mechanism. All Additional Deputy Commissioners were ordered to hear the complaints of their respective districts. Many complaints were addressed within a month — the refugees were satisfied, and the Patwaris and other staff members realised that any corrupt behaviour would not remain hidden any longer.

During those days, my bungalow, which lay near Company Bagh and right across from the office of the *Pratap* newspaper, used to be surrounded by refugees. They would arrive with their applications in the morning. I had slips for queues distributed among them for them to enter the Secretariat. One day, while I was working in my office, I received a call from the S.P. of Jalandhar that around 300 refugees were sitting on dharna in front of my bungalow. The S.P. asked me, “Should I send for the police?” I responded, “No, please do not. They must be in trouble, and that is why they are sitting there.” I listened to their grievances when I returned in the evening. I got to know that these poor peasants had been allotted lands in the area right next to the Beas river, which would keep getting flooded. This was the height of injustice. I asked them to set up a camp in the open space in front of my house. I provided them lassi from my kitchen every day. When I would return from the Secretariat every day, I would hear them singing hymns. I would also sit with them for a few minutes, which would encourage them. I distributed slips to 20 people out of the large group every day, and help them meet a Patwari and Tehsildar, who would then allot land to them at an appropriate location. This is how they got lands allotted in good areas within a fortnight.

Jalandhar was a very unexciting city; apart from the Editors of a few newspapers, it did not have anyone to talk to. It was there that I met Sardar Sadhu Singh ‘Hamdard’, the editor of the Urdu *Ajit*.

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<sup>186</sup> He is talking about the setting up of canal colonies by the British, which drove many agriculturists to cultivate the vast, untouched lands of West Punjab. Many of these agriculturists then moved to these canal colonies (not to say that the canal colony regions had no farmers prior to this migration; this ‘original’ migration has a contested history).

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He started publishing *Ajit* in Punjabi later, and made a name for himself in Punjabi journalism. Hamdard Sahib was interested in the issue of the refugees. He used to write about them in his newspaper. I was impressed by his wisdom. Another acquaintance I made there was Lala Jagat Narayan, who would telephone me and inform me about the complaints of refugees.

Amongst the political leaders, Sardar Partap Singh Kairon, Sardar Durbara Singh, and Giani Kartar Singh used to take keen interest in the matter of refugees. They would bring every incident of injustice they observed against refugees to my notice.

As part of this scheme, some Amritsaris got land allotments in district Hoshiarpur. The Doabias of Hoshiarpur became restless when the Majhails arrived.<sup>187</sup> A few years previously, the Doabias had boycotted marriages with the Majhail community, claiming that the Majhails had stolen the buffaloes of their uncles when they had gone to meet them. Thefts of animals in district Hoshiarpur were on the rise, and the people of the district appealed to the administration to settle the Majhails elsewhere. Agreeing with this request, the administration resettled the Majhails in Kapurthala and Ferozepur. Those who went to Ferozepur got land near the banks of canals, they began cultivating cotton and prospered.

The storyteller Kulwant Singh Virk was the Lok Sampark officer in the Department of Rehabilitation. He was a wise and hard-working officer. He supported me in the issues of rehabilitation. He told me that the land in the district of Sheikhpur (which was where the Virk farmers had come from)<sup>188</sup> was waterlogged, and so they began cultivating paddy in it. They had been allotted lands in the district of Karnal. They cleared forests and began cultivating paddy. The local farmers were unaware about the cultivation of this crop. Thus, the Virk farmers were the leaders of the Green Revolution in Haryana.

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Mian Fateh Singh was the Director of the Rehabilitation Wing of urban refugees. The Department held a big celebration for his retirement. During the celebration, a Superintendent recited a poem containing descriptions of the characteristics of all the officers of the department. This ‘Ramayana’ in the Jalandhar Secretariat had Sardar Trilok Singh as Ram Chandra and me as Lakshmana. Sita is also required wherever there is Ram Chandra. A thin, effeminate officer named Seth, who worked with Trilok Singh, was assigned the character of Sita. A strict officer, whose name I do not wish to mention — he was difficult to talk to — was given the character of Ravana. The need for a Vibhishan was also felt, one who would always stand before Ram Chandra with folded hands. This role was given to Gurbachan Singh, who would always stand before Trilok Singh with folded hands. He was a procrastinator who never finished his work on time. The poet thus recited,

*‘Waheguru-Waheguru Japi Jande,  
Te File Te File Dhari Jande’<sup>189</sup>*

<sup>187</sup> Lit., people of the Doaba region and those of the Majha region — linguistically and culturally different with different dialects and cultural associations with Punjabiyat.

<sup>188</sup> That is, before Partition.

<sup>189</sup> Lit., ‘Keeps chanting God’s name and dragging file after file.’

As part of the rehabilitation scheme, many English words became common parlance — allotment, allocation, standard, acre, over-fall, are a few examples. Many illiterate people would pronounce over-fall as ‘allo-fallo’. Trilok Singh designated the standard acre as that land which could produce 12 maunds per acre of wheat, to measure and compare other lands. At that time, this amount was considered the maximum produce. The refugees did not know that Trilok Singh was a Khatri, they thought he was from the goldsmith caste. They believed in the saying that the goldsmith could measure land like a Seth but could not distribute it judiciously. So, the task of distribution fell on me. Another common belief about Trilok Singh was that he considered Hindus and Sikhs equal and did not discriminate between them. Trilok Singh had only half a moustache, the rest of his hair had withered because of an illness. People used to say that he would show his moustached side when he met Sikhs and show Hindus the non-moustached side when he met them.

During this rehabilitation work, I met three ministers. The first minister was Sardar Isher Singh Majhail. He was a large-hearted, courageous, and pleasant person. After the Bhargav government dissolved, Bhim Sen Sachar formed a new government and Joginder Singh Mann became the Minister of the Department of Rehabilitation. He was sympathetic towards the farmers. He had complete faith in me but was suspicious of Trilok Singh. When Trilok Singh went to meet him, he said, “Sardar ji, the people are annoyed with you. Get yourself garlanded or get a tombstone made for yourself but leave this Department.”

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Even [later] when I worked for PEPSU as the Additional Director General, Trilok Singh would sit and work in the office till 9 p.m. There was no change in his working habits. After that, I was also given the charge of Punjab, and now Trilok Singh was only in charge of planning. Even then he would stay in the office till 8 p.m. The first thing I did when I took charge of the whole department, was to give the staff a holiday on Sunday, which was not allowed earlier, and asked them to leave by 6 p.m. I noticed that this decision improved the efficiency of the staff. Earlier, the staff would be stressed because of constant work. I dislike those people who work in office till late hours — the focus should be on working smartly, and not on how many hours one works. The wise officer finishes his work on time. The people who sit in office till late are often confused — they cannot think strategically and complicate matters unnecessarily.

After Joginder Singh Mann, Sardar Lehna Singh Sethi took charge of the Department of Rehabilitation. He was from Sargodha, and so was genuinely concerned about the problems of refugees. He often took special interest in the problems of urban refugees. One day, he met refugees from the Frontier in Faridabad; they were very agitated. Lehna Singh Sethi had a large potbelly. They told him, “What will you understand about our problems? You must be eating one whole chicken by yourself every day.” Sethi did not mind this comment and continued being sympathetic towards them.

By the time the work of land allotment was about to be completed, I organised a large fair for agricultural tools and implements in Jalandhar. I asked tractor companies, electric motor companies, and water pump companies to bring their products to the fair and display them before the refugees. The tractor company showed its trucks, and the electric motor and water pump companies also exhibited their products very well. This was the time we were

formulating a big scheme to distribute loans worth 1000 crore Rupees among the farmers. Farmers bought tools in this fair and began prospering in their crop-cultivation like never before. Mr. Sethi had been asked to hoist the national flag during this fair.

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The flag stopped rising halfway. After that, he went to Ludhiana and died due to a heart attack.

The work of rehabilitation which we performed has no parallels in human history. Resettling 40 lakh people in two years was a humongous task. I constantly felt like thousands of heavy bundles were placed on my head and shoulders, and that I would feel better if these bundles were removed. I felt exactly like that when this work was completed. I was happy that many refugee families had been re-settled. Later, these very refugees provided the foundation for the success of the Green Revolution in Punjab. When I compare this task with the problem of the Palestinians, I realize that no efforts were made to resettle 15 lakh Palestinians despite Arab nations being financially sound. Those refugee Palestinians are now at the centre of chaos. If this rehabilitation would not have been done swiftly and wisely, Punjab would have been in a similar state.

Chapter 30  
**Spreading the Network of Libraries in Punjab**  
**Ambala**  
 (1951-52)

(P. 208)

The work of rehabilitation was almost over by March 1951. Only a few minor tasks remained to be completed. I did not need to reside in Jalandhar to finalise them. At that time, the Commissioners of Jalandhar and Ambala were to be inter-changed. The house of the Jalandhar Commissioner had been constructed during the time of John Lawrence. It had long, dark, poorly lit rooms. I had been living in this house during my posting in Jalandhar. It looked like a haunted house and thoughts of accidentally encountering the ghost of John Lawrence often crossed my mind. Secondly, my ancestral village Bodlan is in district Hoshiarpur, and if I were posted in Jalandhar for much longer, many relatives and family friends would ask for personal favours and wreck my peace of mind. So, when the Government of Punjab asked for my opinion about the Commissioner's posting, I asked them to post me at Ambala.

The house of the Commissioner of Ambala was at a very exclusive site in Ambala Cantonment. Times have changed. The British Commissioners used to have an army of servants — two butlers, two cooks, two or three gardeners, a masseur, a stable man, and a chauffeur.

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Their wives would also employ nannies to take care of their children. Poor labourers and servants would have meagre salaries. I remember that in those days, sometime in 1946 when I was posted at Faizabad as an Assistant Commissioner, my salary was Rs. 650 and I had one cook, one stable man, a gardener, a nanny and a chauffeur. The cook was paid Rs. 30 per month, and the rest of the staff would only draw Rs. 10 per month. Today I see that even if your salary is Rs. 3000 per month, you cannot afford to keep so many servants. My office was in the Commissioner's bungalow in the new rooms on one side. Having an office and residence at the same premises is both comfortable and problematic. It is a comfort because you do not have to travel for work, and a problem because you are never free of work. I would sit in the office whenever I had free time. So, the office work is always a burden on your consciousness, and you are never mentally at peace.

In those days, the publishing house of the newspaper *The Tribune* had also been uprooted from Lahore, and it was being printed out of Ambala Cantonment. I enjoyed good relations with the Editor of *The Tribune*, Sri Natrajan, and the Manager Prem Nath Verma. I started a science magazine named *Everyday Science*, with the help of the Tribune Trust. This magazine was very successful and popular among scientists. I also helped to build many school buildings in the districts of Rohtak, Gurgaon and Hisar. The rural Jatts were very enthusiastic about development. I developed a scheme for setting up libraries and asked the Government of Punjab for help with it. They told me that only Rs. 50,000 could be given for it annually. I felt discouraged. I asked all the municipal committees to renovate their old buildings and connect



them to the reading rooms of the libraries. There was a very good building in Ambala Cantt. which was being used as a godown by civil supply officers. I got it vacated, converted it into a beautiful library, and named it 'Guru Gobind Singh Library'. This is how libraries were established in the towns of Rohtak, Gurgaon, Ballabgarh and Jagadhri. Then we decided to fill these libraries with good furniture. I had a sample of a strong teak chair with a comfortable wooden seat. I wanted to get many of those constructed, and so I began collecting money for them for all libraries to run smoothly.

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I conducted a cultural festival in the cantonment club which had a painting exhibition; folk singers invited from all districts of the Ambala division performed in it. We also held a Punjabi seminar which Sardar Gurbaksh Singh 'Preetlari' participated in. We further held a science fair in which Dr. S.S. Bhatnagar came from Delhi to participate. This is how I created symmetry between science, art, and literature. Around Rs. 3 lakhs were collected through this festival, the money was then used for establishing libraries. Instead of sending cash, we got chairs made and sent to the different libraries which lacked furniture. I decorated all these libraries with pictures and paintings, myself.

The other two projects which I took interest in were the construction of toilets and children's parks. The budgets of all municipal committees would come to the Commissioner. So, the budgets were re-formulated, and some money was demarcated for these projects. These projects were successfully launched in all towns and cities.

This project was not the result of a government plan. It was my own scheme. The job of the Commissioner is to listen to the appeals of the Deputy Commissioner and to supervise the Tehsils. I had an officer who would go to every Tehsil, record every minute detail about it, and prepare a report for me to read and add my insights to. When the libraries project was completed, I felt that there was nothing else interesting enough for my attention. That is when I thought that the rehabilitation work that I had performed at Jalandhar should be written about. This was important because people often easily forget about the past. I wrote a book named *Out of the Ashes* which was published by the Punjab Government. Now those scholars who want to do research about the rehabilitation of refugees use this book.

In March 1953, the Punjab Government decided to abolish the post of the Commissioner. What should I do now, I asked myself?

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In those days, Dr. S.S. Bhatnagar was the Director-General of C.S.I.R., and I was acquainted with him. It was said that he could get any scheme approved by Pandit Nehru. Those opposed to him constructed a false narrative for Nehru, telling him that Bhatnagar commented, "Nehru is in my pocket." When Bhatnagar went to meet Nehru, Nehru commented, "I have heard that I am in your pocket." Bhatnagar responded, "Sir, you are in my pocket and I am in yours." Bhatnagar established a network of natural science laboratories in the country which helped the progress of scientific research.

Bhatnagar invited me to Delhi, asked me to join him as Joint Secretary and help him out. Maulana Abul Kalam Azad wrote a letter to Bhim Sen Sachar, the Chief Minister of Punjab saying that my services were required in the Department of Science. I went to Delhi and visited the room in North Block where I would soon be working from. When I saw the room, I realized that this was a scheme to cage a bird. I had the habit of travelling across cities and villages to devise schemes for their development. I was living with my friend Sardar Visakha Singh and I was in two minds about whether to agree to take the job or not. I tore off six slips of paper and wrote 'Come to Delhi' on three of them and 'Do not come to Delhi' on the other three. When I picked up a slip, it said, 'Do not come to Delhi'. I was satisfied with this outcome because this was also what I personally wanted.

Chapter 31  
**Development of the Villages of Punjab**  
**Shimla and Chandigarh**  
 (1953-1955)

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The Government of India had launched a scheme for the development of villages in India, called the 'Community Development Scheme'. Mr. Tandon, appointed as the Head Officer for this scheme by the Government of Punjab, was a bright and solemn officer. However, because he had only lived in urban areas, he did not understand the problems of villages. One could see no impact of this scheme even after a year. Sardar Partap Singh Kairon was the Development Minister of Punjab at that time. He appointed me as the Development Commissioner by transferring Mr. Tandon.

I kept all my belongings in a godown in Ambala Cantt. and reached Shimla. There, I began living in a small house near the Punjab Secretariat. The house was located at a convenient distance from the office, so I could come home for lunch, but it did not have a good view of the scenic beauty of the area. Deodar forests surrounded us. The area was also densely populated with monkeys; they would enter my house and spoil food whenever they got a chance.

One day, Kairon invited me to dinner at his house. He brought a plate of lentils and vegetables for me himself, instead of asking a servant to do so. His humility deeply affected me. This was contrary to the popular notion that Kairon was an arrogant person who did not treat officers well.

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I was also in charge of land consolidation apart from rural development — it was this consolidation of land which changed the map of the villages of Punjab. The scattered and fragmented lands of farmers were brought together and consolidated, and unmetalled roads were constructed. I believed that the entire lands of Punjab could be envisioned as a single unit, so these roads could connect many villages and be further connected to metalled roads.

I met all the Public Works Department engineers of Punjab and advised them to bring about a change in the rural life of Punjab by designing new rural roads. If this unique opportunity were missed, the roads would not be constructed again because acquiring connected lands would become difficult. All the engineers understood this. They brought the maps of Tehsils and designed new roads for them. Since all the officers had been engaged in their own routine tasks, this thought of road connectivity did not occur to them, due to which they could not envision such large-scale schemes.

The basic principle of this scheme was that all of the farmer's lands would be consolidated where he had his biggest portion of land — this principle facilitated the work of consolidation. Even with this principle founding the scheme, the Patwaris enjoyed a lot of power in land boundary recording, so they could abuse their power and take bribes from illiterate farmers. Kairon had a secret agency headed by a Congress social worker named

Master Charanjit Singh. In case of any complaint, Charanjit Singh and his associates would disguise themselves as sadhus and go to that village to enquire about the issue. This had a good effect. Other than this, a flying squad of honest officers having access to two or three cars was created, for them to go to the site of a complaint and make enquiries.

The villagers were very enthusiastic about this scheme of road connectivity. Thousands of villagers helped build the unmetalled roads by filling them with loose soil, all over Punjab. I was touring Faridabad and Gurgaon during those days. The villagers I met there were also excited about this scheme. They would garland me and celebrate with processions of elephants wherever I was touring. As compared to this welcome, no minister visiting the villages was greeted so effusively.

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The Chief Minister, Bhim Sen Sachar, became jealous of me.

Kairon and I held a conference of Deputy Commissioners in which developmental schemes were discussed. Instead of appreciating our efforts, Bhim Sen Sachar started opposing us. At that time, there was a big conflict between Partap Singh Kairon and Bhim Sen Sachar.

Under this scheme, a network of school buildings and panchayat houses was created in Punjab. During this time, I also developed a scheme for establishing a network of libraries due to which many libraries were established in the prominent villages of the state. This scheme also helped Punjabi publishers, because they could now sell more books. We would have rendered a great disservice to Punjabi literature if we had not supported them this way. This developmental scheme had a very good effect on the hilly areas of Kangra and Kullu. I began apple plantations in Kullu. The farmers were provided training and free tools, fertilizers, and pesticides. This scheme promoted the cultivation of apples in hilly areas.

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru was touring Punjab. Kairon and I decided to lead him to the villages of Nawanshahr. The soil of this district is very fertile and the Project Officer Ajaib Singh had also worked extremely hard to promote farming there. When news of Nehru's impending visit was published in the newspaper, then a newspaper named *Pratap*, which was published from Jalandhar, published a series of articles called 'The Fraud of the Nawanshahr Community Project'.

I still do not understand why newspapers oppose progressive work. I toured all villages ten days before Nehru's visit. It was finally decided that the celebration would be held in village Naura and Pandit Nehru would be welcomed there. The Editor of *Pratap* wrote that Pandit ji should visit the Arya School of Nawanshahr. I had no objection to that. When we visited the Arya School, the Editor was also present there along with other prominent people. He shook hands with Nehru, and I informed Nehru that he was the person who had written a series of articles against our developmental schemes. The Editor became embarrassed.

A high stage was constructed in village Naura.

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I had asked the village Sarpanch to read out an address before Nehru's speech. His speech mentioned that some communal people were opposing developmental schemes and that the

government should strongly rebuff such forces. The audience clapped for his speech. It was protocol for some minister to say a few words before Nehru's speech. Kairon and Sachar were both nervous, so I had to get on stage and address the audience.

After delivering his speech, Nehru inspected the agricultural fair where an exhibition of tractors, water-pumps and various other machines was being held. This fair had a good impact and helped the farmers progress.

During those days, I decided that the folk songs of Punjab, Haryana, Kangra and Kullu should be collected. I called a conference of development officers and discussed this scheme with them at Nilokheri. Many women development officers expressed interest in this scheme and sent me many songs. I edited all this material in the village Andretta, where Sardar Sobha Singh resides. The folk songs of Punjab were embellished with pictures and Sardar Pritam Singh of Navyug Publishers published this beautiful book. Readers loved this book.

I would like to mention that during those years, the cultural development of Punjab began with enthusiasm. Bhangra travelled from West Punjab to this side. Many Bhangra experts were appointed as social education and awareness officers within the Community Development Scheme. Bhangra teams were formed from among schoolboys; a Bhangra folk-dance tradition was thus established. Giddha was also given affiliation in girls' schools.<sup>190</sup>

It is very important to engage good officers and workers for any scheme. When I recruited *gram sewaks*,<sup>191</sup> I selected them on the basis of their awareness of village problems and their level of enthusiasm about this scheme. They were made to run for three miles as part of the first test. Many weak candidates were thus eliminated. After that, they were asked to plough a field. Those who cleared these two tests were given a written test. As a result, most of the candidates recruited for this belonged to the villages. The head officer played an especially important role in this scheme. If the boss is incompetent, the subordinates also become useless.

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Generally, these officers were recruited through the Punjab Public Service Commission. However, Kairon stopped this practice and said that only those who had served the country would be recruited. Sardar Mangal Singh, who was a Congress and Akali leader, was appointed as a Project Officer in Faridabad. He did a good job. After that, Kairon asked me to appoint Baldev Kapoor, a man close to him, as a Project Officer. I refused because Baldev Kapoor was from an urban background.

Kairon said, "Just appoint him and then evaluate his capabilities." I replied, "He is from a city, how will he understand the problems of rural life?" "It is much more important to be passionate and dutiful than belong to a village or graduate in agriculture studies for rural improvement." I appointed Baldev Kapoor as a Block Development Officer on Kairon's insistence, and posted him at Kharar Block. He worked much more in three months than his predecessor had been unable to do in a year. Baldev organised camps of villagers, school and college students and developed a network of roads in the villages. Many metalled lanes were

<sup>190</sup> Bhangra and Gidha are popular Punjabi folk dances.

<sup>191</sup> *Gram Sewak* or Village Volunteers.

constructed in different villages and many new model schools were also established. Kharar was enveloped by a wave of development, and its progress was evident everywhere. Some farmers had started poultry farming, some reared pigs, while others gained expertise in maize and potato farming. I was happy that my doubts had been proven wrong. I was so fond of Baldev Kapoor that I did not consider him a subordinate, I treated him like a friend. I would hug him every time we met.

Baldev had known Kairon from their times in Lahore, because both had spent some time together in prison. Baldev was a student leader and a patriot. He was passionate about serving his country. India lives in villages, so what can be better than rural development for anyone passionate about serving the country?

After some months, Punjab faced a political earthquake and the Ministry got dissolved. Kairon became Chief Minister.

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Kairon trusted Baldev Kapoor and took his advice on many issues. Baldev took keen interest in the local cottage industry and opened many centres in Kangra district. He went to the US and to Japan and learned many new things.

Now I will talk about another B.D.O. who was a villager. He had a BSc. Agriculture degree and was a Jatt by caste. I went to inspect his work and found that he had left lakhs of rupees unspent. This money could have been used to develop roads and drains in villages, and expensive agricultural instruments and tools could be bought for farmers from it. When I asked him what he was doing, he replied, "I am saving the government's money." This infuriated me and I gave him a piece of my mind.

In 1962, Kairon's seat was in danger. He wanted the officers of the Punjab government to work swiftly for the progress of the state. He would shout at incompetent and dishonest officers in public. Kairon became so busy that he had no time for his family. He met me in Delhi in June 1962 and said, "You go back to Punjab and take the charge of Chief Secretary". I was working as an Advisor for the Planning Commission at that time and was focusing on the study of natural resources of the country, so I did not want to leave that work incomplete.

Kairon resigned in June 1964. The group of sycophants who had surrounded him before, left him high and dry. Baldev was amongst the sincere few who remained. My respect for him increased manifold.

I was living at my orchard in Kharar Garden Colony in October 1964. Even though the political situation was depressing, Baldev remained upbeat. I told Baldev to inform Kairon that he was the 'emperor' of Punjab, so he should stop his family from constructing multiple cinema houses.<sup>192</sup> I suggested that a trust should care for the property and give the family a nominal amount for their daily needs. The remaining income of the trust could be used for scholarships for competent boys to get technical education.

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<sup>192</sup> Kairon's family was making money and developing property for their personal needs, by making use of his political stature.

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This ‘great sacrifice’ would help erase the slander against Kairon’s reputation.

After a few days, Baldev visited me again. He told me that Kairon liked my suggestion, but his family did not agree with him. This was the last time I met Baldev.

One morning in February 1965, I read that Baldev and Kairon had been killed.<sup>193</sup> I respected Baldev all the more — he symbolized friendship and loyalty. He supported his friend, Kairon, till his last breath and so became immortal in my eyes.

I met Baldev’s widow in July 1965 in Chandigarh. She told me that she was struggling for money and financial stability. During the war with China being fought in N.E.F.A., Baldev had donated half his salary and savings for the country. The poor lady was teaching in a school to make ends meet. She told me that Baldev always used to tell Kairon, “Sardarji, I feel that if somebody was to shoot at you, I would shield you and take that shot for you.”

It is strange how this premonition came true — we all know about it, about how Baldev sacrificed his life trying to save his dear friend from the assassins. Those assassins extinguished the flame which had made a name for Punjab in India.

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<sup>193</sup> What he alludes to here is how when former Chief Minister Kairon was to be assassinated, Baldev, who was travelling with him, chose to give his life for his friend. Alas, both were shot by unidentified assailants who could never be traced. It is unclear whether it was a family conspiracy or a political one.

## **Part IV: The Discovery of Kangra Paintings and Folk Songs**



Chapter 32  
**Damthal Ashram**

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*Barfaan di topi pehen khadoti*  
*Khadi hai Dhaulidhar ve Kangre da tilla*  
*Khadi hai Dhaulidhar ve adhiya*  
*Sab nu dasdi pyaar ve Kangre da tilla*

*“Wearing a snowy cap it stands,*  
*Dhauladhar, the hill of Kangra,*  
*Stands Dhauladhar, oh Lover*  
*Speaks of love to everyone, this hill of*  
*Kangra.”*

A range of hill-tops gleaming with snow and lying behind the blue Shivalik hills becomes visible in January. Named Dhauladhar, this mountain can be seen in the North in the month of Poh. It disappears into dust and fog in the month of Vaisakh. The crown of the Punjab plains, it lends beauty to the Shivaliks.

I often pondered over ideas and questions while gazing at these waves of snow from the rooftop of my house in Hoshiarpur district. It would always have a magical effect on me, I always regarded it with exhilaration and reverence flowing from my heart. I often lost myself in this scene from the bungalow of village Bankhandi, situated on the hill road of Hoshiarpur-Una. This bungalow looked like a hawk’s nest hiding in the Shivalik hills — I never tired of gazing at this rare sight of the Dhauladhar. I also viewed this mountain from a different, closer angle, from the Chintpurni temple — I felt like I was drawn to it like a magnet. It shone like a piece of silver in the sunlight, a newlywed queen of the Himalayas, lost in waiting for her groom.

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The Kangra valley is well-known for its fragile beauty. It derives its loveliness from the numerous springs of cool, sparkling and clean water flowing through medium-sized hills, small houses, havelis, *kothas*, temples and terraces of spread-out step-farms.<sup>194</sup> The feminine beauty of this valley is the exact opposite of the snow-covered Dhauladhar, through which icy-rivers flow like they are singing and dancing. Solitude and peace govern the forests of pine trees. This region is beautiful not only because of its aesthetic natural beauty, but also because of its residents. The natural beauty of the Kangra valley gets accentuated by its people. Gaddi boys and pretty Gaddi girls walk around dense cedar forests.<sup>195</sup> They have simple rural lifestyles. These beautiful Rajput and Brahmin girls are shy; they hesitate to display their beauty. Pretty *ghagaras* adorn their waists, along with new nose-rings on their noses and lustrous jewellery on their heads. We have found beautiful samples of art from this valley in which the harmony of lines and colours have immortalised the emotion of love. Even after two centuries have

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<sup>194</sup> *Kotha*, here, an upper floor or chamber.

<sup>195</sup> The *Gaddis* (originally Rajput/Brahmin/Khatri/Rana/Thakur) are a semi-nomadic Hindu hill tribe who rear livestock.

passed, the protagonists of these paintings seem alive, laughing, and playful. Thus, I decided to closely observe and savour this extraordinary valley.

The wind echoed with the *ghoon-ghoon* of pigeons, as peacocks danced on roof-tops. They were spreading their colourful feathers to seduce peahens. Spring had arrived. The soft petals of mulberry slowly opened, and the sheesham trees, which a week ago looked like a bunch of dried branches, were now tinted fresh green. Lakhs of leaves prepared to unfurl. The sorrow of winter was leaving the mango orchards — all the trees now had light yellow flower-buds. Hawk-cuckoos made nights interesting with their cries of *pee-kaha, pee-kaha*, while koels murmured *ku-hu, ku-hu*, to lend life to the gardens during daytime. I could see the white, icy wall of the Dhauladhar right in front; the blue Shivalik hills beneath them looked awe-inspiring.

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I started conducting research on the hills of Kangra, its rivers, people, and the beauty of its art, in March 1951. Kangra is a valley of the Beas river. Many other rivers unite with Beas in this valley. We crossed the Beas river from the new bridge of Mirthal. Mukerian-Pathankot road is the most beautiful road of Punjab. Situated at the foothills, this road crosses mango orchards and choes; many bridges have been constructed on the choes at different places. The bridge of Mirthal is a good model of engineering science. When we crossed this area, we saw mango trees covered in light yellow blossoms, the air was infused with their fragrance. The fields appeared lush green, and wheat stalks danced in the cool morning breeze. We reached Damthal Ashram after driving for eight miles. This Ashram is situated in the lap of the Shivaliks. We crossed a very dense forest of Banyan trees, before we reached the Ashram. These Banyan trees looked like a clump of green temples. The pilgrims slept in the cool, sweet shade of these trees; the air is cool because the rays of the sun rarely reach the ground. It is always dark there. The aerial roots of the Banyan trees look like the matted hair of some hermit from the Himalayas. We entered the old, sacred, and extraordinary Ashram. In order to enter this Ashram, one has to walk through a beautiful long corridor (*deodhi*) constructed in the style of Rajputana architecture. A large beehive hung from the gate at the entrance. This was followed by tombs dedicated to mahants.

This Ashram was built by Narayan, son of Tota Ram, a Brahmin from village Kahnuwan in Gurdaspur district. Many stories of Narayan's miracles have been famously circulated. It is said that a trader with donkeys loaded with bags of sugar was passing by Damthal. Some boys playing nearby asked him, "What is in the bags?" The trader replied, "Sugar." One of the boys named Narayan said, "There is sand in your bags." The trader ignored what the boy said, but when he reached his destination, he saw that his bags actually contained sand.

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The trader met Narayan again on his way back. This time, Narayan said, "There is sugar in your bags", and the trader's joy knew no bounds when he actually found sugar in them later. After this incident, it came to be known that the Brahmin boy had some special powers. A

similar story is famous about Sheikh Farid, and that is why he is popularly called Farid Shakarganj.

Sometime later, Narayan was called to the Mughal Emperor Jahangir's court to display his miracles. He was given six bowls of poison, and he comfortably drank all the six bowls. To check whether the poison offered to him was actually potent, a seventh bowl was given to an elephant to drink. The elephant died within a few seconds. This incident is depicted in one of the paintings on the walls of Damthal Ashram, one can see him drinking poison while two hands of God support his back, helping him through that dangerous situation.

It is said that there was a shortage of water in Damthal, which caused a lot of difficulty to the village-people. Once, while meditating in the forest behind the temple, Narayan suddenly struck his long tongs on the ground — a waterfall emerged from the place he had struck. A permanent lake has been developed by damming that waterfall. The cave in which Narayan used to meditate lies on one side.

The Raja of Nurpur, Jagat Singh, got the temple of this Ashram constructed in 1646. Shah Jahan was reigning at that time. The walls of the 'narrative-hall' (*katha-shala*) of this temple have been decorated with paintings belonging to the Kangra school of art. When we visited this temple, it was in a bad state — we saw that its roof was about to collapse, and wasps were buzzing in all the rooms. Other than paintings about Narayan, many paintings depict scenes from the Mahabharata and Ramayana. Some paintings show Krishna playing with Gopis, while others show Shri Ram Chandra getting married. The hill kings used to seek shelter in this temple during difficult times. It is said that when Raja Bir Singh of Nurpur was scared of being defeated by Maharaja Ranjit Singh, he fled and hid in this temple.

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In a corner of the temple, a painting shows a woman standing near a deer, and playing a toomba under a tree. This scene can be seen repeated across many Kangra paintings. The theme of this scene is Virahini Nayika,<sup>196</sup> a woman immersed in the memories of her husband and expressing affection towards a black deer. This emotion has been expressed in the following lines:

*“Pe Milan Ki Chah Chit,  
Khari Bhagwat Tar.”<sup>197</sup>*

A double-storeyed Ashram, it has a room called Rang Mahal (Hall of Colour) on the upper floor. This was constructed in 1850. The wall-paintings of this room are based on Sikh art. Generally, the characters have long beards and beautiful turbans embellished with pearls and diamonds. Some paintings also have scenes from the Ramayana. In one of the paintings, a British man is shown sitting in a buggy with his wife. The horse-cart is driven by four horses.

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<sup>196</sup> *Birhani Nayaka* in Punjabi. *Birha* (*Viraha* in Hindi) connotes separation, while *Nayaka* means female protagonist. This theme refers to the pain of separation.

<sup>197</sup> Can be roughly translated as, the overpowering desire of meeting the lover drives the soul, but she stands waiting.

This shows that these paintings were made after Sikh rule, that is, during British rule. Many paintings of mahants in this Ashram are painted in red-ochre (*gerua*) and other dark colours.

Hari Das, the Mahant of this Ashram in 1934-35, took away its famous collection of Kangra art. The current Mahant has only one collection of Durga paintings brought by a Jatt Army officer from a temple of Peshawar, in 1947. That officer also brought some samples of Gandhara sculpture art, statues which are mainly the head of Mahatma Buddha. One of those statues is of Rishi Markand. Lachhman Das has kept the statue of Markand in his room and the strange thing is that this statue resembles Lachhman Das.

Mahant ji met us very warmly. After that, he went to the forest behind the Ashram. The forest has many mulberry and mango trees. The air was infused with the fragrance of the *kamni* and *basuhti* flowers, and the earth was covered with blue flowers. A Gaddi was supervising his flock of sheep grazing nearby. We took our leave of Mahant ji after savouring the peace and solitude of the Ashram to the fullest. We asked him to take care of the wall paintings. It seemed that he did not have any idea of the value of those paintings.

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We crossed a river named Chaki, after returning from Damthal Ashram. Many layers of sand and soil with embedded pebbles lie on both sides of the road. These sand, silt, soil, pebbles, and stones are the deposits of the Shivalik river, also called the great river of Indo-Brahm. The three rivers, namely Brahmaputra, Ganga, and Indus flow into this river; the Shivalik river used to flow into the Miocene Sea of Sindh in Punjab, which was part of the Tibus Ocean. About 10 lakh years ago, when the earth's crust was shifting, the rocky surface of the Pothohar plateau in Punjab emerged, and that is when the Shivalik river stopped flowing. The Himalayan rivers on the west of Shimla changed direction to flow as Chenab, Ravi, Beas and Satluj, while the rivers on the east of Shimla began flowing as Ganga, Yamuna and so on, draining into the Bay of Bengal. This change of direction is proven by how all these rivers take the shape of the English alphabet 'V' and their end points are directed to the North-West. The hillocks, sand, soil, and pebbles of the Shivalik river rose again to take the shape of the Shivalik hills. So, the Shivalik mountains are the remains of the old Shivalik river.

Another aspect of this phenomenon is evident in the distribution of aquatic animals. The animals which can be found in the river Sindh, can also be found in the Ganga and Brahmaputra rivers, but cannot be found in the Mahanadi river of southern India. Ganga and Sindh have common water channels and aquatic animals. This proves that a long time ago, Sindh and Ganga used to flow together. Their aquatic animals could not have travelled across thousands of miles of land to shift from one river to another. So, this proves that in older times, these rivers used to flow together as one river.

The meandering nature of Indian rivers is famous. There is no high mountain near the Ganga and Sindh rivers and a small shift in the levelling of earth can change the water flow from one river to another. Earlier, a river called the Indo-Brahm used to fall into the Arabian Sea but because the level of the earth was raised due to tectonic shifts, this river got divided into two rivers. The one draining into the Arabian Sea

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is called the Sindh, and the one draining into the Bay of Bengal is called the Ganga and the Brahmaputra. According to geographical timelines, this division is not very old. The rivers flowing into the Arabian Sea gradually changed their flow towards the Bay of Bengal and the last phase of this division was the separation of the Ganga and Yamuna, which must have happened in the recent past. Before this change, it is possible that the Yamuna had been flowing into the west, and then at some point fusing with the Ganga, and then with the river Sindh, and then with the now dried-up river whose remains have been found in Rajputana. The river has changed its course multiple times. In the north of Delhi, the river Yamuna flows near Karnal, and the Ghaggar river of today used to flow together with the Yamuna near North Bikaner and Suratgarh. While passing through Bahawalpur, it would join Sindh and take the name of Hakra. The dried riverbeds of Hakra or small Ghaggar are still visible at some sites and are shown on the maps of northern Rajputana and southern Punjab. The Yamuna has now sunk quite deep into the plains for it to change its course anymore, as a result, it will now remain a tributary of the Ganga.

The Shivalik hills contain fossils of ancient animals. There were many types of animals in the forests and marshes of the Shivaliks around 10 lakh years ago. Around thirty types of elephants, horses, camels, barasingha, giraffes, rhinoceroses and other kinds of animal bones have been fossilised in the Shivaliks. Giraffes and hippopotamuses travelled through an earthen bridge from the forests of Africa to India, that bridge deteriorated later. A strange animal called the Sivatherium, larger than a *gairda* and having four horns and a trunk was living in the forests of the Shivalik. This animal is now extinct. Monkeys which could walk like humans used to live in these forests, they were greatly attached to the people here. So, the sandy soil of the Shivaliks, which is a source of trouble for the farmers of Hoshiarpur, was once a riverbed and is the smallest mountain range of the Himalayas today.

## Chapter 33

## Nurpur

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*Kharian kuwaliyan bas mere paundiyan*  
*Ho peedh lagi jali bakhiya*  
*Ho paani kiya kari bharna, nurpure diyan*  
*ghatiyaan*

“Standing for long in wait,  
 my waist hurts,  
 how do I fill water from the valleys of Nurpur?”

After crossing the Chaki river in the midst of the beautiful Shivaliks, we reached Pathankot-Kangra road. There are sheesham trees on both sides of this road, and orange and mango orchards surround it. We could see the Nurpur Fort from there. The Jhabbar Khud constitutes the boundary of the fort on one side.<sup>198</sup> The stream flowing through this valley is a tributary of the Chaki river. The dak-bungalow of the Forest Department of Nurpur is situated one mile away from the town. The icy peaks of the Dhauladhar can be seen from this area. A semi-circle of icy peaks lies behind the trees, the Dhauladhar constitute its right arm, while the Pir Panjal range in Jammu comprises its left arm. Scattered on the hill, the habitation of Nurpur spreads till the fort area.

The dak-bungalow of Nurpur is beautiful. One can see the snowy peaks of the mountains from here. However, one cannot find anything to eat here since the fort is located away from the main town. There is no house or shop nearby. If my friend and former classmate Punjab Singh Pathania had not met me here, it would have been very difficult for us to cater to our needs. We were sitting in the veranda of the bungalow, gazing at the mountains, and feeling ravenous, when we saw a young man on a bicycle loaded with food.

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When he came closer, I recognized him as Punjab Singh. Such times are the test of true friendship. I think that the people of rural Punjab are perhaps the most loving and affectionate people in the whole world. They keep their own problems on the backburner and are ready to sacrifice themselves for others' needs. I became so sentimental upon seeing Punjab Singh's concern and efforts that I hugged him tightly.

Nurpur has an interesting history. It was the capital of an old Rajput kingdom. This kingdom was spread over the areas of Nurpur, Pathankot, and Shahpurkandi in Gurdaspur and till the west bank of the river Ravi, till Lakhanpur. The older name of Nurpur was Dharmeri, a name derived from the *guler* tree. The *guler* tree grows widely across Nurpur. This tree was formerly called *duber* and then it came to be called *dharmeri*. The history of this tree reveals the way Hindus loved trees in ancient times.

Nurpur Fort was constructed by Raja Basu on a rocky mountain, between 1580 to 1613. Raja Basu had a Kushan temple constructed here. Today, only the foundations of this temple

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<sup>198</sup> *Jhabbar Khud*, or Jhabbar gorge.

remain. The portraits of Krishna and his Gopis are painted on these foundations. A tree-lover, Raja Basu developed a mango orchard near the fort in Maokot. This mango orchard is four miles away from Nurpur. Today, it is known as Raja ka Bagh (The King's Orchard).

After Raja Basu Dev, Raja Jagat Singh became the Raja of Nurpur in 1619. He was the most popular king of Nurpur. He fought with the Raja of Chamba for twelve years and in 1633, he took over Chamba. He ruled it for the next twenty years. In 1614, Raja Jagat Singh defeated Bhupat Pal and took over Basohli. In 1634,<sup>199</sup> Emperor Shah Jahan appointed him as a *mansabdar* — he was permitted to maintain three thousand sepoy and two thousand horses. He rebelled against Shah Jahan in 1640, and the Emperor conquered the forts of Maokot, Jaragarh and Nurpur in 1641, in retaliation. Jagat Singh and his sons sought shelter in the fort of Jaragarh.

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Jaragarh is twelve miles away from Nurpur. The fort of Jaragarh is situated on top of a hill and is surrounded by deep ravines on all sides. The Mughal armies followed Jagat Singh there as well. There ensued a furious battle in which many were killed; the Mughals destroyed the forts of Nurpur and Jaragarh. In the end, Jagat Singh and his sons sought Shah Jahan's pardon and the Emperor displayed his magnanimity by re-appointing them to the mansab rank.

In 1645, Jagat Singh was sent to Badakhshan on a mission against the Uzbeks. He had fourteen thousand Rajput soldiers, all of whom proved their bravery in battle. A poet named Gambhi Rai from Nurpur has described this battle in one of his poems, his poem is popularly sung in fairs even today.

*'Jagta Raja Bhagta Raja, Vasudev ka Jaiya;  
Sindhu Mare Sagar Mare, Himachal Dere Layiya;  
Akaash ko Arba Keeta tan Jagta Khaiya'*<sup>200</sup>

After the victory of Badakhshan, Rajputs gained fame as warriors. Elphinstone mentions this mission as follows, "The bravery shown by the Rajputs had never been witnessed before. They crossed hilly rivers, crushed icy paths, dug their own trenches, and defeated the Uzbeks. People saw Raja Jagat Singh clearing away snow with his spear during the war. The way his armies attacked the enemy in that snowy region amazed all present."

Emperor Jehangir visited Kangra valley during Jagat Singh's reign. His Begum Nur Jahan had also accompanied him. It is said that the Queen loved the valley so much that she asked the Emperor to build her a palace in it. A stretch of land in front of the fort on the hill was selected for the construction, and Raja Jagat Singh, who had invited the Emperor, began constructing it. However, he did not like this plan. It made him fear that he would now perpetually live under the Emperor's shadow. Once, when Queen Nur Jahan went to oversee the construction of the palace, she saw that all the labourers and women workers had goitre

<sup>199</sup> There is a misprint in the original text which mentions this date as 1934.

<sup>200</sup> Can be interpreted as: Jagat Singh, Vasudev's son/ when he was defeated at Sindhu, he came to Himachal/ He was named 'Jagat' when he won the sky, the world. That is when he earned his name.

protrusions on their necks. When she enquired about it, she was informed that the weather of Nurpur made its inhabitants vulnerable to this disease.

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This clever scheme of Raja Jagat Singh worked — the Queen changed her mind, stopped the construction, and went to Kashmir with Emperor Jahangir. Even today, the residents of Nurpur point at the foundations of his unbuilt palace across the gorge and tell this story. Even though the palace was never constructed, the ruins of Dharmeri continue to carry the memories of Jahangir and Nur Jahan. That is how its name changed from Dharmeri to ‘Nurpur’.<sup>201</sup>

The last Raja of Nurpur, Bir Singh (1789-1846), was wrecked by misfortune. In those days, Maharaja Ranjit Singh had established his kingdom in Punjab and was expanding his influence over the hill kingdoms. Resorting to different excuses and reasons, he routed the kings of the hills one after the other; Bir Singh could not defeat him. In 1815, Maharaja Ranjit Singh called for a durbar in Sialkot. Bir Singh did not attend this durbar. The Maharaja fined him Rs. 40,000. Bir Singh collected his savings in currency, his gold ornaments, and other precious items but he was still short of the money fined. So, Ranjit Singh took over his kingdom, appointed him to an estate, and warned him to stay put. Being a self-respecting person, Bir Singh refused the estate and went to Chamba instead. Many people assembled with him, but they could not withstand the force of the organised army of the Sikhs. Bir Singh reached Arki, near Shimla, in disguise and lived there for ten years.

In 1826, Bir Singh took on another disguise, returned to Nurpur and surrounded the fort. Maharaja Ranjit Singh sent his forces under the command of Desa Singh Majithia, causing Bir Singh to flee to Chamba. The Raja of Chamba, his brother-in-law, caught him and presented him to Maharaja Ranjit Singh. The Maharaja imprisoned him for seven years in the Gobindgarh Fort in Amritsar. Bir Singh’s wife, the sister of Raja Charat Singh, was living there as well. Raja Charat Singh paid the ransom of Rs. 85,000 to the Maharaja and brought Bir Singh home at his sister’s request. Barnes refers to another property of Rs. 25,000 with reference to Raja Bir Singh. This jagir was given via Raja Dhyan Singh. The Raja of Jammu, Dhyan Singh was the Prime Minister of the Sikh kingdom. He wanted Bir Singh to pay his respects to him, and only then would he give him charge of the jagir.<sup>202</sup>

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However, Bir Singh refused to do so. He belonged to a long line of Kings. Whereas, Dhyan Singh was merely a local leader made raja by the Maharaja. How could a commoner disrespect a Raja of his stature like that? This is evidence of Rajput ego. Even if he lost his wealth, his ego was satisfied by this decision. He had to live in forests and hide himself in Damthal Ashram. This Ashram gave shelter to many needy people. Bir Singh’s Rani and child continued

<sup>201</sup> Nurpur, after Nur Jahan, Mughal Emperor Jahangir’s beloved Queen.

<sup>202</sup> A deed of landholding, essentially a feudal land grant gifted by a superior like a King or other authority. The *jagirdari* system rested on taxation being conducted from the *jagir* unit and being paid to the overall authority.



living in Chamba. They were given 500 Rupees every month by the Raja. In 1845, when the British defeated the Sikhs for the first time, Bir Singh tried to re-conquer his kingdom. He surrounded the fort of Nurpur with his forces, but a lifetime of hardship had weakened him. He died outside the walls of the fort.

Bir Singh was survived by his minor son Jaswant Singh. This child lived under the guardianship of Ram Singh Pathania. Ram Singh was a brave Rajput who had always desired to revive the old regime of Nurpur. Ram Singh assembled his army near Jammu in 1844. He captured the fort of Shahpur after crossing the river Ravi. He declared Jaswant Singh as the Raja of Nurpur and himself as the Minister of the Raja. The small town of Shahpurkandi, which is ruined now, was a prominent trading centre from the 18<sup>th</sup> century to the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Huge caravans used to cross this area. Around five miles from Shahpurkandi, there is a place called Mukteshwar which has many temples constructed on rocks, dedicated to the Pandavas.<sup>203</sup> The paintings on the walls and pillars look very old. It is said that Shri Arjuna visited this place.

The hill near the river has a gorge called 'Arjun-Chulha'. This gorge can be seen from Dalhousie road, once you reach a height of one thousand feet. The fort of Shahpur, which is a beautiful ruin today, is situated on the left bank of the river Ravi. Most of its towers have fallen, the only one standing opens towards the river.

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A dak-bungalow has been constructed in this tower. The beautiful scenery of the hills can be savoured from the wooden balcony of this dak-bungalow. The meanders of the river look very attractive from the balcony. This place has pleasant weather during the winters, when a cool breeze blows.

When the British came to know of Ram Singh's uprising, they sent their army from Hoshiarpur to capture the fort of Shahpur. Ram Singh and his accomplices escaped from the fort, went to the forest down the hill of Nurpur and put up resistance. But they lost in the end and fled to Gujarat. The remaining Sikh armies gave him shelter. Ram Singh returned in 1849 with two Sikh regiments and set up his front on one of the Shivalik hills called 'Dalle ki Dhar'. This hill is towards the north-east of Shahpurkandi. The British fought under the command of General Wheeler and lost many men, but Ram Singh had to escape to Kangra where a Brahmin gave him refuge. However, the Brahmin accepted the British reward and informed them about Ram Singh's whereabouts. The British exiled Ram Singh to Singapore, which is where he ultimately died. Even today, songs of Ram Singh's bravery are sung by Pahari-Bhatt singers who sing about how he fought against the British on the hills of the peaks of Dall, how drums were beaten, the canons thundered, and the hills were drenched in blood.

Mian Kartar Singh, the great-grandson of Ram Singh, lives in a village named Basavaziran in Nurpur. He has the *zarabaktar* which Ram Singh used to wear. He has a collection of Ram Singh's paintings as well. When the British burned down Ram Singh's house, some women retrieved these paintings from the burning building. It is said that when Ram Singh heard about his burnt paintings, he wept, upset.

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<sup>203</sup> From the epic *Mahabharata*.

These paintings have been created in three major styles — Basohli, Rajasthani and Kangra. The oldest paintings belong to the Basohli art style. These paintings have dark red borders and dark colours; however, they are different from the ugly paintings of Basohli despite belonging to the same style. They have been etched with great delicacy, more specifically, the women in these paintings have very sharp features. In this style of painting, the influence of Rajasthani and Mughal styles can be especially observed.

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The facial structures of the characters in paintings are usually oval. This collection has a lot of paintings. In one painting, Raja Bir Singh is shown riding a black horse. There is a hawk on his right hand. This collection also has paintings of Vazir Ram Singh and Vazir Sham Singh.

In one painting, a loyal orderly of Ram Singh named Sodha, is shown walking behind him. Sodha used to reach Nurpur from Lahore in just one day. In the collection of Kangra paintings, some paintings are religious in nature while others have been painted in sringara rasa. These paintings are completely different from the other paintings in the collection. The colours chosen for them are darker and their artists have used a lot of reds, blues, and yellows. Some paintings which reflect the darker moments of life are especially beautiful portrayals of sringara rasa because of the colours chosen. In these paintings, the red or yellow clothes of the women impart lustre to their pink faces and bodies as supple as jasmine. In these paintings, the men are often portrayed as handsome youths while the women are depicted as seductresses.

In religious paintings, the lives of Kabir, Ravidas, Dhanna and Guru Nanak have been portrayed. Kabir Sahib is shown sitting with his wife Loi. While he weaves cloth on the loom, his wife spins yarn. Ravidas, the Guru of the Adi-Dharmis, is shown making shoes while his wife works on the spinning wheel next to him. Dhanna was a famous saint of the Nats of Rajasthan. In one painting, he is shown sitting on the banks of a lake. There is a black quilt covering his head and body, makki roti and saag in one of his hands, and a tumbler of buttermilk in the other. His beloved cow is shown standing behind him. In the painting of Guru Nanak, Mardana is shown playing the sitar next to him.<sup>204</sup> Guru Nanak is shown wearing a yellow cloak and there is a multi-coloured shawl often worn by fakirs, on his shoulder. Mardana appears to be lost in spiritual ecstasy, there is a glow on his face. Baba Nanak is listening to Mardana's music with great love. It is said that Baba Nanak would often lose himself in the light of God while savouring music. In the background of this painting lies a mango tree with creepers crawling up. Embellishments like these are quite common in Kangra paintings, especially in those of Krishna Maharaj.

After looking at this collection of Mian Kartar Singh, we went to visit Nurpur Fort.

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There is a school in the ruins of this fort where classes are held under the trees. It looked like there was paucity of space in that school. We entered an enclosure in front of the school which

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<sup>204</sup> While Randhawa's original text says 'sitar', it is known that Mardana, Guru Nanak's companion, played the 'rabab'. These are different musical instruments.

was surrounded by umbrella-like *maulsri* trees on all sides. The wall paintings there depict the life stories of Krishna Maharaj. Extremely beautiful paintings of gopis are installed in the doors. It is said that the statue of Krishna Maharaj was made of black marble, and that it was especially brought from Chittor. This is the same famous statue which Mirabai used to worship.

The hills of Nurpur are dry and barren, and because of sudden rain the soil gets eroded, leaving the rocks underneath exposed. Only bushes and pine trees can grow on these rocks. This place does not have extraordinary sites, one can only find pine, *kaner* and sheesham trees here.

Another beautiful site in this area is a waterfall. It is one mile away from Katra. Here, truck and lorry drivers stop to draw water for cooling their vehicle engines and travellers halt to slake their thirst. There is an interesting temple near this waterfall. In this limestone cave, people worship stalagmites as shivlings. Limestone water drips from the roof of the cave. So, the limestone has taken the shape of candles. There are huge rocks outside the temple which have been engraved in the shape of elephants. However, some miscreants have broken these elephants' trunks. When we entered the cave, we saw an ascetic with knotted hair sitting cross-legged and drunk on bhang.<sup>205</sup> One can see the lovely scene of the valley from the bridge. The fresh green leaves of the sheesham tree appear very beautiful.

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<sup>205</sup> A drink prepared from cannabis, often drunk or mixed into sweets during festivals.

Chapter 34**Nagrota****The Quietude of the Hills and the Taste of Tea**

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It was dawn. The sun was gleaming from the peaks of the Dhauladhar. It slowly rose above the hill-tops, imparting a grey tinge to the icy peaks. Surrounded by fog, the pine trees looked wonderful. The tinkling of bells tied to the necks of mules enhanced the peace and tranquillity of the hills. I woke my companions from their slumber. Archer and Mulk Raj woke up rubbing their eyes and dressed. We then began our journey to Kotla.

Ahead of Shahpur, the natural beauty of the area inspired us all. We entered Kangra tehsil. Shahpur is a huge village on the side of the road. The spacious dak-bungalow is surrounded by tall peepal trees. There is an amazing lustrous wall of ice covering the Dhauladhar on the northern side. The terrace farms look like waves, making the surroundings very aesthetically pleasing.

Many waterfalls originate from the Dhauladhar and irrigate these farms. The steps of these terrace farms eventually increase in size and look like open grounds. The farms slightly slope, and the farmers' sheds dot the landscape. The slopes on the northern side are full of hillocks.

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The grey shade of the hillocks appears red at times, and sometimes, the yellow of lichen can also be seen on them. Stones half-pressed in the earth and surrounded by grass are a special sight in Kangra. There is another picturesque village named Gaggar nearby, a crooked river flows next to it. Perhaps the best view of the Dhauladhar is visible from Gaggar. Huge hillocks and rocks lie at the base of the gorge and the slopes of the banks are covered with mango trees. The magnificent peaks of the Dhauladhar can be seen in the background.

The hills near Nagrota are full of peepal trees spread like huge umbrellas. Many years ago, these trees had been planted by goatherds for shade. Here, the road is almost straight, and turns are rare. Ahead of this area, the hills are full of pine forests and tea gardens. The tea bushes have been pruned into square shapes. One can also see the calm oyi trees at some places.

Our friend Bisambar Das lived in Nagrota. He greatly helped me during my search for Kangra art. He invited us to have a meal at his place. We wanted to reach Palampur so we asked him if we could leave after tea, but he did not agree. Dusk arrived; the last rays of the setting sun imparted a golden hue to the Dhauladhar. The 'Mahakhad' (great gorge) of Nagrota lies near Kayastha Bari. Full of large boulders, the gorge has lush green farms all around it. I sat on a large boulder near a paddy field and savoured the beauty of the mountains.

The beauty of nature and peace of the hills makes you forget about the struggles of life; one feels that the great power which has created the universe, resides here in the tranquillity of these hills and forests. We use loudspeakers in gurdwaras and temples to scare away this fragile spirit, just like people clap to shoo away crows sitting on the walls of their houses. Religious

fanatics want to cage this pious beauty in churches, temples and mosques but are incapable of doing so.

I was so engrossed in my thoughts, sitting in the lap of the quiet hills, that I did not realise that night had fallen.

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The full moon shone in the sky and the white snow gleamed in the moonlight. Bisambar Das brought tea for me in the fields. I slowly sipped my tea while gazing at the beauty of my surroundings. Just like snowy peaks can be enjoyed by oneself, tea is also best sipped when it is quiet and peaceful. When I look at people chatting away like crows and sparrows, I feel strange. Our ancestors have rightly said that only fools talk while eating. Two things cannot be done properly at the same time — one neither enjoys the food, nor the chatting. Focus on eating and savour food, you can talk once it finishes.

There is a special relationship between tea and tranquillity. This idea cannot be comprehended by us Punjabis because we are used to drinking milk and lassi, and not really accustomed to having tea. Even today, many of us feel that tea creates undue heat and dryness in bodies. Around thirty years ago, I also thought like that and I considered tea drinking a harmful addiction like alcoholism and smoking. In 1932-34, when I was in England, I would ask for milk even during parties and trouble my English friends. They would think, what kind of a man does not even drink tea? In 1935, my wife inculcated the habit of tea drinking in me, and now I love sipping it. When you come home exhausted after work, the exhaustion vanishes after a cup of tea.

Whenever I travel, especially to the northern or southern parts of India, I only drink either tea or coconut water. Green coconut is delicious in summers, and it carries no danger of infections. The sun has distilled this water, placed it in the coconut and sealed it as well. I only drink tea during journeys. Boiling the water kills the germs, and the dust settled in the throat is also cleared by the tea drunk.

The tea plant originated in southern China. It was used as a medicine and it was believed that it helped with curing fevers, ridding one of tiredness, satiating the soul and cooling the eyes. Drinking tea became a popular trend in the Yangtze Kiang valley in the 4<sup>th</sup> century. During the reign of Emperor Tang in the middle of the 8<sup>th</sup> century, a saint-poet named Luvu began a new way to drink tea and wrote a scripture on it.

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This scripture contains the details of how to drink tea, which utensils to use, and how to stabilise the mind. Drinking six to seven cups of tea was not considered uncommon. A Chinese poet named Loteg writes, “Tea is nectar. The first cup calms my lips and throat, the second one rids me of loneliness, the third one goes to my intestines, the fourth one makes all my sins wash away in sweat, the fifth one makes me pious, and the sixth one takes me to the Gods and Goddesses of Heaven.”

The ritual of tea-drinking began in Zen Buddhism. All the priests would sit before the statue of the Buddha and gravely drink tea from the same cup. Zen Buddhism reached Japan in

the 15<sup>th</sup> century and gained fame under the leadership of the Shogun Ashikaga Yoshimasa, making drinking tea part of the daily lifestyle. The tea-drinking room became a peaceful temple and everyone entering this room would forget all their worries and struggles. The door of this room was only three feet tall, so everyone entering this room would bow first. This made people humble and polite. The room would have a painting of flowers and leaves with quite simple decoration. The Zen tradition originated from focused meditation, because the Buddha emphasised on meditation as a means of attaining peace. This message was conveyed by Buddhists from India to China, and then reached Japan in the 6<sup>th</sup> century. In the 16<sup>th</sup> century, Rikao developed the custom of tea-drinking as a model of peace and purity. The guests would quietly come into the tea room, and there would be no sound other than that of boiling water. Everyone would introspect, and quietly admire the simple décor of the room.

The tea room used to be very clean. It was so clean that not a speck of dust could be seen. The pebbled path joining the tea room to the rest of the house would be especially cleaned. However, the artistic nature of the Japanese priests could also be seen in how they cleaned. The priest who would lead the tea drinking ceremony was called the ‘tea teacher’.

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Rikao was a famous tea teacher. The tea ceremony was about to begin, and some well-known people were expected to participate in it. Rikao’s son Shoan was washing and cleaning the pathway in the garden. He cleaned the path for an hour and came to his father. He said, “Father, everything is prepared. I washed the path thrice. I also washed the stone lanterns and leaves and there is no leaf or grass on the path.” “You stupid boy!”, the tea teacher shouted, “this is not the way to clean the garden pathway.” After saying this, Rikao came to the garden and moved a branch of cherry blossom. The yellow-green leaves of the tree fell on the pathway, which looked like it belonged to a fantasy of autumn.<sup>206</sup> Rikao wanted natural beauty to accompany cleanliness.

Tea makes a person alert; it helps one focus. This is why when Buddhist priests meditate, they consume tea, just like our priests take *sukkha*. The custom of tea drinking has affected the lifestyle and culture of many people, it has influenced painting and horticulture as well.

In 1610, the East India Company brought tea to Europe. This reached France in 1638, Russia in 1639 and England in 1640. When new items arrive from foreign countries, they become the talk of the town. In 1756, an English writer wrote that men remain short and women lose their beauty if they drink a lot of tea. Despite such claims, tea became popular and it became a common drink by the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Famous writers like Edison, Steele, Samuel Johnson, and Charles Lamb were all lovers of tea. Lamb once wrote that the most interesting thing one can do is help someone secretly. The Japanese artist Okakura gave these notions of tea drinking the name of ‘tea-ism’. He says that ‘tea-ism’ is the art of hiding beauty so that few can find it. Lamb’s theory of secretly helping is also a part of ‘tea-ism’.

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<sup>206</sup> Here, Randhawa calls the cherry blossom ‘Chinar’, a tree variety found in Kashmir and other hilly regions. However, it may be noted that in case of Japan, this story refers to the ‘sakura’. The ‘Chinar’ is also another name for the Sycamore tree.

I was engrossed in these thoughts when I heard a Pahari song from Kayastha-Bari:

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*“Kuthon te ugmi kaali badli,  
Oye mundia, prithi singha,  
Kuthon to ugmia thanda neer o!”  
Chhati te ugmi kaali badli  
O kuriye inder diye,  
Naina ton barsiya tatta neer o!*

Where has this dark cloud come from,  
Oh Prithi Singh,  
Where has this cold water come from?  
This dark cloud has settled on my chest,  
Oh daughter of Indra,  
And the hot water from my eyes!

The singer was singing with so much emotion that it sounded like a wounded heart.

In the meantime, we were invited for dinner. Our host had gathered a group of Gaddi boys and girls. They sang many songs for our entertainment’ we enjoyed their performance tremendously. The whole family of our host served us food, much to the amazement of my companions from urban backgrounds.

I often think that we are quite different from the people in the West. Our people are loving by nature, they are amazing hosts. Even if they are poor, they will not let a stranger leave their village hungry.

As compared to them, the white people of the West are selfish and materialistic. They will talk to you only if they need your help for something, even if they are rich. They are fair-skinned and hard-hearted people.

Our poor farmers are so warm that even if their clothes are in tatters, they leave their work to attend to their guests.

We thanked our friends and began our journey to Palampur. The black oyi trees stood tall and quiet in the midst of the tea gardens. The road gradually slithered upwards like a snake, and we could see the lights of Palampur within half an hour. We crossed the bazaar and reached the bungalow ‘Session House.’

Chapter 35  
***‘Palma Da Chilke Paani’***

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*O Dhara Chilke Pathar Gatiyan*  
*O Palma Da Chilke Paani*

That stream cutting through stone valleys,  
that cold water of Palam

Palampur looks like a precious pearl lying in the lap of the Himalayas. Its beautiful pine and deodar trees stand guard under the shadow of the Dhauladhar like sentries. Quiet roads surrounded by tall pine trees, tea gardens with icy waterfalls nearby, and bungalows with tall trees look as pretty as a picture. Palampur is a unique portrait of beauty and tranquillity. A bungalow named ‘Session House’ is the most beautiful out of all its elements. It is a lovely sight — some lover of nature must have carefully selected the plot for its construction. The entire range of the Dhauladhar can be seen from its veranda. The three peaks of Dhauladhar look like a painting by Roerich, while the pine trees look like its frame. Clouds cover its snowy peaks in the afternoon. There is lightning and thunder during the monsoons. The thunder echoes in the valley of Bandla; it appears like the supreme power is making a statement of its power and majesty. It rains very heavily here; the clouds do not tire of raining.

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This is a very pleasant time in Bandla Khud, one can spend hours gazing at blue and black clouds and snowy peaks. The garden in Session House is full of colourful flowers with pine trees in the background. In the month of Baisakh, this area becomes saturated with the fragrance of the *taggar* fruit.

Walking around the villages of Bandla valley and Neugal valley is a very pleasant experience. The path going towards Bandla is bordered on both sides by pine trees. We crossed to Bandla valley from the right side. We found a house on the way, probably inhabited by a farmer, which had a single *lidar* tree. Makhan trees lie on both sides of this valley, their leaves turn copper coloured in the month of Baisakh. The farms which looked like ascending steps had flourishing wheat and barley crops, these crops would be harvested in Jeth. In the middle of this month, the farms are ploughed again. After ploughing, all members of the farming family including women and children, break large lumps of soil into smaller grains. Everyone carries large wooden hammers in their hands for this process. The farms become water-logged in Jeth-Harh,<sup>207</sup> the farmers then drain out the water. Thousands of water-falls gleam in the shining sun. The water-logged farms reflect light, looking like glass, and this valley of Palam looks like a dream. Then, the farmers begin growing paddy in the farms, which gets ready for harvest by Assu.

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<sup>207</sup> Jeth, Harh, Assu, Poh are all traditional months, kindly refer to the Glossary.



The houses of Dalits lie on the outskirts of the village,<sup>208</sup> while the middle of the village is occupied by Soods' houses. These people are the shopkeepers and moneylenders of this area. There is a temple on the right side of the village, pictures of Shiva and Parvati are painted on its walls. This art has been painted by Gulabu Ram, an artist of the Kangra school. The main road of the village is made of stone; there is a waterfall next to it. This clear waterfall imparts a strange beauty to the village. There are hydro-power driven flour mills at the northern end of the village, and Gaddi people live nearby. The trees bordering the farms are often mercilessly cut to increase pastureland for the animals. The empty branches of some of these trees form terrifying shadows on the roofs of the Gaddi people's houses. The Gaddi farmers have clean houses, their walls are coloured with light blue *golu* and yellow fuller's earth from the soil outside. This earth is brought from the Dhauladhar. There is a gorge named 'Niggall' some distance ahead.

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This gorge is very deep, and a few fallen rocks of the mountain lie in it. A clear river flows through this gorge, it also emerges from the Dhauladhar. A waterfall on the left is used to irrigate the tea gardens of Bandla. When looking at the waterfall from afar, it appears that it flows in against gravity, from down to up. There is a flour mill and distillery near Niggall gorge. Gaddi people often come here to drink lugdi. There is another village of the Gaddis on the other side of the gorge. Their box-like yellow houses look very beautiful.

The villages of tehsil Palampur can be divided into two parts: one part is those villages situated at the foot of the Dhauladhar towards the north of the Palampur-Bajjnath road, while the other part is on the southern side of those roads. The villages, namely Deol, Lunnad, Kadambri, Bandla, Pakandi and Rachia are situated at the foot of the Dhauladhar. All these villages are located on hillocks. A gorge named 'Awa' lies near Deol while the Niggall gorge is situated near Bandla. The farms of these villages are irrigated with icy-cold water. These villagers are either farmers, herders, or hunter-gatherers. These people used to catch hawks and *shikras* and send them to Western Punjab. It is because of the division of Punjab that the trade of hawks and shikras has stopped. The number of big landlords who were fond of hawks and shikras has also dwindled now. So, these hunting birds are not caught by the villagers anymore. This is why hunting is dying out as a profession in the foothills of the Dhauladhar. The numbers of hill roosters named *munal* and *barfani kukkad* have also reduced, and the hawk and shikra population has increased.

Banuri, Saliana, Patti, Deogram, Maniara, Tikker, Droh etc., are the villages in Palampur where tea plantation is popular. Tea plantation was begun in this area by Doctor Jameson for the first time in 1849. He brought tea saplings from the stock of Almora and Dehra Dun for this purpose. Nowadays, many parts of this region have tea plantations; the farmers also grow tea in their farms. They dry the tea leaves in small furnaces, and the tea made of these leaves is relished by people who appreciate local cultural and craft traditions. The houses in these villages are usually double-storeyed, and they are made of slate. Many houses have windows painted on the doors.

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<sup>208</sup> The word he uses to refer to the Dalit community of the village is *Chamar/Chamiar*.

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In the last twenty years, these people have become more aware of healthy living, so many houses now have windows and roshan-daan. There are pastures near these homes, and one can see small black cows grazing in these pastures. Saliana village is very beautiful. Dogra Brahmins live here. Wild rose bushes are planted on the borders of farms, and during the month of Baisakh, their white and pink hues impart a special beauty to the Palam valley. Wild pear trees abound, they become covered with white flowers during Chet (March-April). The Palam valley looks like a fair girl wearing white clothes.

Gazing at the pink and white flowers of the wild rose bushes gave me immense pleasure. Many bushes bordering the farms are beautified with these rose plants. White *kaintha* flowers give me even more joy. White symbolizes peace, just like pink symbolizes love between human beings. This spirit of happiness blesses all living beings including animals, birds, trees, flowers, fish, just like human beings. This spirit of happiness is like a flowing river — just like our bodies need nourishment, this spirit of happiness feeds on the beauty of nature.

I became upset when I saw some cowherds plucking roses. Japanese people are wiser than us, they love the flowers and other flora growing in their country. It is said that a Japanese girl went to fetch water from a well near her house. She saw that a creeper of American jasmine (*ashq pecha*) was clinging to the well and a sky-blue flower had blossomed on it. She loved the veil of the creeper, and the flower blooming on it so much that she could not draw water from the well; she instead asked her neighbour for water.

A similar story about a Japanese Queen named Komio is famous. During prayer-time, Komio went to the flower garden to pluck some flowers for prayer. She was unable to pluck the flowers because she found them so lovely, and instead said, “If I pluck these flowers, they will be defiled by my hands. I dedicate these flowers to the service of Mahatma Buddha.”

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Basho was a Japanese saint-poet and nature lover. When cherry trees develop light pink flowers, Japanese people celebrate this beauty by sitting under these flower-laden trees. These cherry blossoms are so delicate that they fall even with light breezes, or because of loud noises. Monk Basho was walking and ringing a bell. While passing the cherry trees, he stopped ringing the bell so that the flowers would not fall.

During the Phagun (February-March) month, I heard the *ghoon-ghoon* of the pigeons from the *kaintha* tree; I thought that these birds must be chattering about the flowers. The white flowers of the *kaintha* drenched in dew, looked like stars with teardrops gleaming on them. Many people ask, what is the utility of flowers? Flowers not only develop into fruit and food, but it is because of flowers that we have become civilised humans from forest-dwellers (*vanmanush*).

Some five to six lakh years ago, when *vanmanush*'s companion looked up at the flower-laden *chamba* tree, she believed that she could also partake of the beauty of the tree and so she plucked some of its flowers and fixed them in her hair. Her companion praised her, and from that day onwards, they began walking on the path of civilisation. Even now when we want to express our delicate emotions, we do so through flowers. If we wish to express our love for God, we dedicate flowers to Him.

One finds scattered houses at the outskirts of the village. Most farmers want to live near their fields and prefer to select places for their huts where they get proper sunlight and shelter from rain. The houses of the Rajputs can be easily distinguished from others' houses. Rajputs select peculiar places so that their women can live in purdah. In older times, Rajputs used to consider themselves safe in those houses which were constructed on hilltops, those houses could only be accessed through long, winding, narrow stone stairs. Even the horses could not pass through the stairs at some very narrow points.

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There is a *baoli* in the middle of the village constructed with stones. Pictures of men, women and oxen have been painted on the stones of this baoli. When a married man dies, a stone is fixed into this baoli in his memory. The stone has his picture. If a bachelor dies, an ox is painted on the stone.

The houses of Ghirts (a hill caste) are generally hidden among bamboo, *kachnar* and *toon* trees. At times, *padam* and banana trees are also grown near the houses. These houses are scattered all over the valley. One can also see banana and mango trees a little way down the valley of Nagrota. Across the valley, large *semal* trees stand majestically tall, loaded with deep red flowers. The leaves of these trees fall off and only the flowers remain on the branches.

My friend Parmeshi Das was waiting for me in Saliana village. About half a mile away from the village, we saw Gaddi people beating drums while coming towards us. There were many children in that group. It looked like their whole village had arrived. They placed marigold garlands on our necks. Playing the narsingha and tootani instruments, they took us towards the school where the wise gentlefolk of Palam had assembled. The people praised me and Archer for our desire to preserve Kangra art, in their welcome speech. This love and appreciation showered on us by these simple, honest people, greatly pleased us. When we realized that these gentlefolk were aware that my interest in Kangra art was not just for official purposes, but that it also extended to folk songs and research on hill cultures, we were pleasantly surprised. What other than this can bring more joy to a researcher and writer?

All these villages like Saliana, Andretta, Ajogar, Parihal, Jandpuri and Paprola are examples of natural beauty. There is a garden near Saliana around which many shops and houses are located.

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In this garden, a fair takes place in the month of Baisakh every year; shopkeepers participate in this fair to sell sweets, bangles, copper utensils, earthen pots, and other wares. Other than the Brahmins, Rajputs and Ghirts of Palam valley, Gaddi men and women also participate in this fair. These people come from the Gadheran plains of Dhauladhar. They add festivity and colour to the fair; they dance and sing to the beats of the nagara. Loaded with silver jewellery, the Gaddans watch their men dancing. This place looks deserted when the fair ends, only a few black cows can then be seen grazing here.

Chapter 36  
**Andretta**  
**Norah and Sobha Singh**

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*‘Bhinni Rainiyen Chamkan Taare’<sup>209</sup>*

We found a wedding procession on the way from Saliana to Andretta. Narsingha players in front, drummers behind them, and a well-dressed wedding procession following them, walked with joy. I made the groom and his companions sit on a table-like smooth stone and clicked their photograph. When he came to know who we were during our conversation, he invited us to have lunch along with the procession. We tried to refuse the kind invitation by inventing excuses but by that time, the bride’s procession also arrived. They turned out to be my acquaintances, and also invited us to partake of their wedding feast. We were already quite hungry, so we savoured the feast of the wedding ceremony. Listening to the women’s wedding songs while sitting on the rooftops was also very enjoyable. When I see the affection and hospitality of Punjab’s rural farmers, I immediately recall my experience in Europe. We are so different from the people of the West! I remember that in England, nobody offers even a glass of water for free, and our Punjabi farmers have such generous hearts. If somebody has a little more wealth than others, their only desire is to serve guests with even more affection. I saw that the biggest difference between us and the people of the West is that we are large-hearted people, and we appreciate sharing our resources with each other. But these Western people are completely individualistic; they maintain different and competitive accounts for father and son, and mother and daughter. Wherever you see, ‘I, Me, Myself’ is the only sound you can hear.

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This is the big disease of the West, and this is pushing them towards destruction. Science has created a number of comforts, but it has reduced the size of human hearts even more. This is why there is so much restlessness in Western countries; it is rare to see happy and satisfied people in their cultures.

I often contemplate that this disease of self-centredness does not only afflict Western cultures, it can also be seen in the people living in our big cities. I remember that when I was studying in Mission College, Lahore and living in its Newton Hostel in 1925, I offered a meal to one of my Lahori classmates. I fed him maanh di daal, mutton and ghee-laden parshad. He relished the meal. Some days later, he met me and said, “Dear Mohinder, do not worry. I have eaten your food; I will also invite you to a meal at my place.” I did not even recall that I had fed someone food as a favour. What was the need for feeding me in exchange? I found what he said very strange. The reality is that the people of our villages, our farmers, are sons of the soil, they are deeply bonded with nature, and the generosity of the earth is imbued in their

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<sup>209</sup> ‘Stars twinkle in dark nights’.

blood. This is why they meet guests and friends with joyous faces and feel glad if some friend shares their meal with them.

After climbing a small hill, we began travelling up another hill again. After crossing a few tea gardens, a village named Andretta, decorated by numerous fields of kaintha trees, became visible. Laden with white and pink flowers, kaintha and padam blossom into spring during the months of Chet-Baisakh.

Andretta village is a new site of habitation, and the water of its springs is very cool. This is why many solitude-lovers and artists have settled down here. Norah Richards has been living here for the past twenty years. Here Norah has an ashram named 'Woodland Estate'; this estate is spread over 15 acres. Now this ashram is one of the elements of the village. Norah is the widow of Professor Richards who used to teach in Lahore's Dyal Singh College. After living in Banoori village at the edge of the road for some time, Norah chose Andretta village to gain the unique experience of creative study, research and living. She is an admirer of the American poet Walt Whitman. She considers his poetry anthology *Leaves of Grass*, her Bible. In the beginning, Norah kept herself involved in the work of rural living. However, some time later, she began imparting lessons to the village people through dramatic performances.

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She has written a number of plays about our rural lives; these were regularly performed by the drama teachers of village schools. Bains Prashad is a big admirer of Norah, and he lives with her. Norah has also constructed a small open-air theatre, the back-stage work is performed in a simple hut nearby.

The unique beauty of the Dhauladhar can be fully enjoyed from Andretta. The mountains stand like a wall. The icy peaks reflect streaks of light which blind the eyes. Icy rivers emerge from these snowy peaks and gush down the mountains like mercury. Clouds emerge in the afternoon to harmonize all these elements of beauty. The interplay of sunlight and cloud as they play hide and seek paints an incomparable picture. This drama of nature continues over the Dhauladhar throughout the day and stops much later, after sunset. The mountain peaks look like melted gold when the sun sets behind them. Then the colour of the sky becomes light pink or brown. At night, the rugged mountain peaks give the impression of softness in the moonlight and the Palam valley sleeping at the foot of the Dhauladhar begins to look like a beautiful woman out of a dream.

Dhauladhar is mentioned in Norah's plays. A farmer has set up his hut in front of Woodland Estate beyond the depression, this hut mars the view of the valley. Norah has planted a line of eucalyptus trees which cover the sight of the farmer's hut. Nowadays Norah is in her eighties, and she hopes that she will be able to see these eucalyptus shoots grow and completely cover the sight of the farmer's hut with their dense foliage.

Norah lives in a two-storeyed house whose roof is made of slate. She has built this house as per her specific norms of architecture. The walls have been covered with cooling mud both within and without, and they appear clean and smooth. She has arranged for a place to sit under the trees outside, the people living in this ashram gather there for evening tea. The lower floor has a room with many earthen utensils and jars in which wheat and rice have been

preserved. Umbrellas made of leaves hang from the walls. She lives in the rooms on the lower floor during summer, the rooms open through a door into a garden outside.

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The door of this room and the bamboo shed outside is covered with wisteria vines. In the summer, these vines develop clumps of hazel flowers. The garden has guava and mulberry plants. This garden also has rose bushes and other wild plants. These flowers have a lovely and tranquil effect. In the winter, Norah lives in the room on the upper floor. She has gathered a few things for her use in this room. Usually, she remains lying in bed. Weak and old Norah — it appears like she is some spirit of the mountains. But when she gets up and begins talking, there is a strange radiance in her eyes, and the silky white hair scattered over her face looks very lovely. She often debates the principles of the power of culture, and sings the praises of culture in a world increasingly killing over greed for power. Wherever she sits, a blue vase containing yellow sunflowers is always kept behind her. Here, one of her companions named Jai Dayal also lives with her. Jai Dayal used to teach in college and he is also passionate about performing drama. When Norah needs Jai Dayal to assist her after resting for a while, she calls for him using a horn, and says, “Jai Dayal, Jai Dayal!”

Norah’s reading room lies on one side of the balcony. This room has curtains made of sacks. Mats have been spread on the floor and the furniture of the room constitutes only one chair and a table. Instead of glass, the roshan-daan has *khaddar* cloth covering it. The sack-curtains cleverly match the earthen walls. Many people do not like kutcha mud houses. If somebody wants to witness the beauty of kutcha houses, they should see Norah’s house in Andretta. Clean houses rubbed and smoothened with mud appear like children of the earth. The ugliness of baked bricks cannot be seen here.

Norah has made many other buildings on all four sides of her house. There is Badami Niwas on one side. This house was named after a loyal horse. This house is inhabited by those teachers who come here for short durations to teach drama and culture courses. There is another hut on the other side, in which an Irish writer and his wife recently lived for some time. There is a hut owned by the Bedis under the hill. This was made by B.P.L. Bedi and Farida Bedi.

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But now, this has collapsed. After the Bedis left, this hut became a major source of trouble for Norah. To prevent a column holding the roof from falling, Norah got another room constructed, this did not help at all. Right next to this, there is an opening in the four walls of the ashram, which the draught animals of the village often breach.

Punjab’s famous artist Sobha Singh also made Andretta his own and built his hut in it. There is no Punjabi who does not know about Sobha Singh. His painting of Guru Nanak, which has ‘*Naam Khumaari Nanka*’ written under it, is present in every Sikh household. Copies of his famed painting of Sohni-Mahiwal can be found with every art-lover.<sup>210</sup> Sobha Singh was

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<sup>210</sup> Sohni-Mahiwal is a famous Punjabi legend of lovers beset with tragedy, where social pressures force them apart first. When Sohni secretly begins crossing the Chenab river to meet her lover, her sister-in-law comes to know. She replaces the earthen pot she uses to float over the surging river with

drawn to Andretta because of his love for the mountains and because of the solitude and tranquillity of Kangra. He remains absorbed in his work the whole day. He paints the women of the hills with the beauty, coyness, and innocence characteristic of them. There, he has also sculpted a bust of me, which he has placed in a glass case. Because this statue is made of brown cement, many innocent hill people believe it is a statue of God Krishna and offer flowers to it. Sobha Singh has made a circular pond in front of his shop and installed a tall bamboo stick in it. He hoists the national flag on this stick during Independence Day. Sobha Singh has imparted a lot of joy and festivity to Andretta, his house continues to double as a club for art-lovers. Not only educated people, but simple farmers also visit his house in large numbers to see his paintings.

Sobha Singh has painted very beautiful scenes of the lovely women of Kangra. A newly wed beauty wearing *kaleera* is shown lifting the curtain of her decorated palanquin and looking out. There is a catchall in front of her; a bird with outstretched wings dances over it, appearing to have fallen in love with her and trying to woo her. This painting reminds one of the Kangra folk song “Bhabi Cuckoo Kihan Bolda”.<sup>211</sup> These paintings of the beautiful women of Kangra done in Sobha Singh’s hand have a special place in Indian art.

We drank in the beauty and peace of Andretta. There, I settled myself in the upper veranda of my friend Basant Singh’s house, and lay there, gazing at the Dhauladhar. The hide and seek of the clouds over the peaks, and interplay of light and shadow were mesmerizing.

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The idyllic picture of herds of black cows and flocks of sheep grazing in the pastures nearby was also very pleasing to the eye.

Baini Prasad invited us to his house for dinner. Planting clumps of bamboo in front of the houses and banana trees at the back is a common custom in Pahari houses. I asked him why banana trees are planted in the backyard. He told me that when the wind blows, the leaves of banana trees turn outwards and tell the wind, “Please go.” But, the residents of Kangra are very welcoming to their guests and so they plant bamboo in front and banana at the back. The branches of bamboo bend inwards and invite the wind, “Please come.”

We entered the main room after crossing the bamboo and began our meal after washing our hands. *Bhature*, *maan*h di daal, and rice and mixed *dheo* pickle were delicious, and there was also mango vegetable (*maani*) alongside. Eating the sour chutney first is appropriate as per the rules of science, the sour flavour cleans the taste-buds for better reception of other tastes.

From this, I recall the story of Raja Prakash Chand and Sansar Chand. Once, Raja Sansar Chand invited the Raja of Guler, Raja Prakash Chand to Nadaun and arranged for his meal. The chefs of Raja Prakash Chand were accompanying him, and they did not want the chefs of Raja Sansar Chand to gain more appreciation than them. They fed Prakash Chand with

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a kutchra, unbaked pot. Sohni drowns. Mahiwal jumps after her to save her and drowns as well. Singh’s painting shows the two lovers, their clothes drenched in the waters of the Chenab, embracing before their tragic demise. The original painting is on view at the Amar Mahal Museum and Library, Jammu. As per the accompanying caption, Maharaja Hari Singh of Kashmir is credited with returning the image rights to Sobha Singh, so that he could make copies and sell them.

<sup>211</sup> “Sister-in-law, what does the Cuckoo twitter?”

*mahal poode*<sup>212</sup> before he began the meal. After that, the Raja found all the other dishes tasteless. When the chefs of Sansar Chand came to know about this, they fed him the maani, and so the Raja began to taste all their dishes properly after his palate was cleaned.

When Prakash Chand became aware of this trick of the chefs of Sansar Chand, he rewarded them.

While talking about the Kings of Kangra, our conversation shifted to wild animals. Bainsi Prasad mentioned that these animals often enter houses during the night. Last year, a tiger had entered his neighbour's house in the dead of the night. However, his neighbour was a brave man. He shut the door, and he and his brother taught the animal a lesson with clubs and axes.

After living there for some days, we decided to tour some other villages as well, and so we left.

We left the village of Andretta after crossing the bazaar.

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There is a river that follows the bamboo forest near Andretta; there is a Shiva temple on its banks. The Trehal village comes after this. The unique feature of this village is that here, paddy is husked with water-powered mills. The villages of this area have dense forests whose leaves are like copper, they bless this area with majesty. One can also find uncountable clumps of bamboo here. The Awa and Punn valleys have semal trees on their edges, they bear red flowers. Slabs of stone are often placed under these semal trees, people worship these slabs after rubbing them with *sindoor*.

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<sup>212</sup> Or *malpua*, a sweet pancake submerged in sugar syrup, and sometimes flavoured with cardamom.



## Chapter 37

**Bajnath**

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| <i>Shiva mere Mahadeva ji naache mukut</i>     | Shiva, my great God dances with scattered |
| <i>khilaae</i>                                 | tresses                                   |
| <i>Rani gori gori Ganga rani mukut chupaae</i> | My fair Queen Ganga spills from his locks |

We crossed a forest of oak trees, after passing through a bazaar full of the shops of Soods, and exiting Andretta. We then came across a fast-flowing river.

There is a Shiva temple on the banks of this river. After passing this, one reaches Trehal. This village has hydro-powered mills to separate paddy husk. The toon trees whose leaves gleam like copper, gentle bamboo trees and masses of banana trees impart a special beauty to this village.

Just like Kangra art, the trees and bushes of this area are a study in opposites, and this balance is the reason for the beauty of this valley. There is an amalgamation of Hindu and Mughal styles in Kangra art, similarly, the flora of Kangra represents the vegetation of hot and cold countries, a confluence of Europe and Asia. The trees of both these types can be found here, that is trees found in cold countries and those found in warmer climates. The trees of bamboo, peepal, mango and oak grow alongside cherry trees and wild roses. Semal trees with red flowers grow at the edges of the gorges of Awa and Punn. The trunks of these semal trees have large platforms shaped like rough steps. Some of these platforms have been coloured with sindoor and are worshipped as deities.

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We reached village Paprola after passing a gorge. This village is located right next to the main road; its bazaar has a lot of hustle and bustle. One can see the culture of the Kangra valley reflected in this bazaar. Now it has been electrified as well.

There is an ascent from Paprola to Bajnath. One walks along Binnu, a gorge right next to the path. The Aryans of olden times used to call it 'Binduka'. We realized that we were entering the old town when we recognized the landmarks of Binnu and the temples of Bajnath. There is a dak-bungalow on the left, from which the Binnu ravine can be seen. A powerful, cold, and swift wind blows here all year long. There used to be a fort of the Rana of Bajnath at the location of the current dak-bungalow. He accepted defeat from the raja of Trigarta (Kangra). About a hundred years ago, his palace, temples and ponds were located in this area, but today, only their ruins can be found. One can also come upon small copper coins in the soil.

The water of Bajnath is considered good for the digestive system, and it is said that Raja Sansar Chand used to get his drinking water from here.

We saw something bizarre in a large ground on the outskirts of Bajnath. Some young girls were crying and walking towards the river, while young boys standing at the banks of the

river watched them. Eventually, the girls threw some idols into the river with great difficulty and began crying louder. The boys laughed at their antics. When we asked about the origin of this strange ritual, we were told that it originated from women's desires to get good husbands.

In the whole world, women pray for good husbands, and the girls of the Kangra valley do it by worshipping Ralli.

On the last day of Phagun, girls install an idol in their house and begin worshipping it. The girls assemble and worship the idol for fifteen days, and then, on the first day of Baisakh, they celebrate the marriage of Ralli and Shankar. Half of the girls represent the household of Ralli, while the other half represent Shankar.

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The idols of Ralli and Shankar go through all the marriage customs, like rubbing rouge for example. A Brahmin priest performs the havan, and girls rub mustard oil into the heads of Shankar and Ralli. Shankar is dressed like a groom, and then both the idols are placed in a palanquin, taken to the river, and then submerged in it.

This unique but interesting custom originates from the history of this region. It is said that once, a Brahmin married his daughter Ralli off to a young boy named Shankar. After the wedding ceremony, when the bride left with her child-husband and her brother Bastu, to go to her new home, she stopped the palanquin near the banks of the river. Then she told her brother Bastu, "I was destined to marry a child, but I do not want to live this life anymore. However, I want girls to make three idols in my memory, one idol for me, one for Shankar, and one for my brother Bastu. The girls should worship these idols in the month of Chetar; the idols of the two of them should be married off on the first of Baisakh, just like I was married off. Two or three days after the marriage, these idols should be brought to the river in a palanquin and drowned. All this should be done in my memory, my brother, and girls who perform this will not get mismatched grooms." Saying this, Ralli jumped into the river and drowned. Since that day, everyone in the Kangra district has been worshipping Ralli, Shankar and Bastu.

After witnessing the Ralli ritual, we went to the Baijnath temple. Perhaps the best historical monument in the Beas valley is the temple of Baijnath. As the biggest temple here, the Baijnath temple is known for Shiva-related spiritual knowledge. It appears that the town was named after the temple. This town was formerly called Keer Gram. Two stone engravings in Sharda script were found here, and the name of Keer Gram was found on them. These writings have been inscribed in beautiful poetic Sanskrit. These poems describe the history of the temple. Two local traders got this temple constructed. These hand-written poems tell us:

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"There is a beautiful village named Keer Gram in Trigarta. This village has many special features. The Binduka river emerges out of the lap of a mountain and playfully passes through it, appearing just like a girl looking beautiful in her youth. Raja Lakshman rules over this village. Two brothers named Manuka and Ahuka lived here. Their father was named Sidha. These brothers had not divided their property yet. Both the brothers were kind people. They got this temple constructed. Idols of Ganga, Jamuna and other deities have been installed in the

doorway of this temple. The chief of the masons working on this temple, Ashika, was from Susarman. The son of Samana Boeka also worked with him. This Shiva temple was built under the leadership of these expert masons.” This temple was constructed as per the architectural precepts of Shamu, and the idols in its gateways shine till date. The fact that both the masons who built this temple were from Kangra, is interesting.

The structure of the Baijnath temple is somewhat like this: there is a platform for worship built over 8 sq. ft., the secret of why this is so is not shared with anyone. This is surrounded by a mandapa. This mandapa has a sloping roof. A linga called ‘vediyam’ is kept in this special place of worship. One can enter this space through a narrow opening surrounded by pillars on both sides. The roof of the mandapa is balanced on these four pillars. The beams of these pillars divide the roof into nine parts. The roof is made of stone. A magnificent entrance lies in front of the mandapa. This also rests on four pillars. These are simply made pillars, harking back to the architectural style of olden times. They have a square base, two large circles on top separated by some space — all these are examples of ancient architecture, but the Hindu style of decoration was added to cover them in later times. There are balconies on the northern and southern walls of the mandapa which have windows in them. Two fortifications for defence have been constructed on both sides of the temple. Nowadays, the idols of deities are being kept in the niches in these walls. The outer walls of the temple have been beautifully constructed. They have been decorated with pillars, and the space between the pillars is embellished with idols of deities like the Sun God.

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One of the Nagari writings of 1240 says that one of the idols of the Sun God is actually an idol of Lord Mahavira.<sup>213</sup> The roof of this temple looks newly constructed, and according to the priests of this temple, it was repaired by Raja Sansar Chand II. This temple fortunately escaped damage during the earthquake of 1905. That earthquake completely demolished the adjoining Sidhnath temple.

The natural beauty of the Baijnath-Joginder Nagar region is extraordinary. When we climb a little higher than Baijnath, we can properly admire the beauty of the valley of Palam. The swaying farms of paddy dotted with farmers’ huts, hordes of toon and bamboo trees, the Dhauladhar mountains in the north, the slope of Andretta towards the south, and multiple hills in the north-west together make an unforgettable scene.

One can see the temple of Ashapuri from here. This temple functions like a beacon of hope for Pahari people during difficult times. We entered a beautiful valley after passing through a forest of pine trees. This valley is surrounded by hills on all sides. It does not have any gorges or depressions. The hills gently descend to the road; there is a forest towards the south and paddy fields to the north; the farmers’ houses look like they are climbing the steps.

Electric wires of the power station extended over the Ull river spoil the idyllic scene. One feels that these necessary evils of modern life will ruin the natural beauty of this valley.

The shops on the roadside are decked up. The shopkeepers have grown vines of white roses entwining through their shopfronts; the flowers shine in the moonlit night.

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<sup>213</sup> Lord Mahavira is the 24<sup>th</sup> and last tirthankara of the Jains.

Two miles further, we saw a Gaddi rearing his sheep. He tried to start a fire with a magnet and a stone as his sheep grazed nearby. He warmed water in a stone stove and poured tea into a thick copper glass. Upon seeing us, he said, "Please come and have tea with me." I thanked him for his hospitality and said, "Your life is so comfortable, there are no worries. You graze animals, drink their milk, and live peacefully."

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While sipping tea, he responded, "Your life is better. You move around in motorcars. You go to a new place every day. What is my life? I sleep in the hollows of trees like a bear. Sometimes, my sheep get lost, and I have to face mountain lions at other times." I asked him, "Where do you stay at night?" He pointed towards a tree-hollow and said, "There."

There is a village named Beerh above Baijnath and in the foothills of the Dhauladhar. This village was the capital of the Pal Rajputs. There is a thick forest of oak trees outside this village, and a river flows through the forest. The rich tea garden owner of this area, Prithipal, lives there. He is a very welcoming host.

A fair is organised in this forest of Beerh during Holi. The Gaddi and Kanot people come from Dhauladhar. They drink lugdi and sing and dance the whole day. Just like the Kullu festival, the people of this area also bring idols of their local deities in palanquins. The Beerh festival gives the impression of the Kullu Dusshera. One can see the diversity of colours people dress up in for this fair, and the heavy jewellery of the local women reminds one of the Kangra school of artists who have depicted the beauty of these women in so many paintings. By developing this school of art, they not only perfected their own art, but also preserved Pahari beauty, delicacy, and love with their paintbrush for the generations to come. The well-dressed men-folk regale us with their laughter and inspire us to settle down in the valley.

We began our return journey to Ambala after savouring the aesthetic beauty of the Kangra valley and encountering the beauty of its people. I asked my court clerk, a simple Jat from Haryana who had accompanied us on this journey, "Chaudhary sahib, how did you like the hills and forests?" He just gave me a formal response, "Very beautiful, janaab." But, when we reached Palampur in the evening, I asked Parmeshi Das, my friend and helper, about how Chaudhary felt. He told me that the Chaudhary had said, "Thank God I am alive!"

While we looked at snowy peaks and dense forests, Chaudhary focused on the deep gorges and dangerous turns.

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There are very few nature-lovers in the world. Only a passionate lover of nature can enjoy the beauty of the Kangra valley.

An elderly person from my village used to say that a committee of vultures flew over a city and just saw the dead bodies, a flock of waterfowl crossed and only saw water bodies, and butterflies and bees only saw beautiful flowers.

One sees only those things which are in one's nature. My friend Chaudhary got scared of the deep gorges, but I enjoyed this journey to the fullest. I only found human beauty, the delicacy of art, and the loveliness of nature in Kangra.

Chapter 38  
**Maharaj Nagar**  
**The Great Collection of Kangra Paintings**

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Our friends in Andretta informed us that a large collection of Maharaja Sansar Chand's paintings was in the possession of the Raja of Lambagaon. Dhruv Dev Chand, the Raja, lives at Maharaj Nagar below the hills of Ashapuri. We wanted to see these paintings, so at the break of dawn, we mounted our horses and began our journey from Andretta with Parmeshi Das. There is a small village called Dattal on this route. The hedges on both sides of the road were fragrant with wild roses and jasmine flowers. Orange and yellow flowers looked like they were dancing. We reached a village named Parha after passing through these rose and jasmine flowers. Parha is a beautiful village with waterfalls. Its old banyan trees not only provide comfort to travellers but cattle like cows, calves, sheep, and goats also take shelter here.

A village named Bhaora lies next to Parha. This village has very different geography — it neither has waterfalls nor abundant greenery. Only desert-like mountains can be seen all around. This area is called Changar. We slowly rode to village Darman next and saw the Ashapuri temple from afar. This place has a small marketplace with six to seven shops. We decided to rest there for a while. A shopkeeper lent us his cots, which we placed under a banyan tree and rested on.

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A group of women were also sitting on the platform under the banyan tree. They were eating chapatti with mango pickle and shooing away a dog repeatedly approaching them. The shopkeeper offered me a glass of lassi flavoured with black pepper, which I diluted and then thoroughly enjoyed drinking.

We moved further after thanking the shopkeeper and reached Naagban in half an hour. We did not see any 'naag' (snake) here, but it is said that the snakes emerge in large numbers in this place during monsoons. It is a thick forest, and one can see vines climbing up the trees like ropes. The trees are laden with yellow flowers while the vines are full of white flowers — they make the thorny *kikkar* and *falahi* look so attractive. Vines hugging trees are a common sight in Kangra paintings. The vine symbolizes the woman while the tree symbolizes the man. In olden times, the *madhavi* vine was made to climb the mango tree and they were married off. In Hindi and Sanskrit poetry, the woman is depicted as a vine. Artists have expressed this union in their paintings.

We soon reached Maharaj Nagar. We had assumed that Maharaj Nagar would be a big village, but it only had the Raja's residence, his servants' houses, and a bamboo forest. There are orchards of loquats and pears on the upper sides of the houses. While we gazed upon this scene, Raja Dhruv Dev Chand and his Dogra manager came to meet us. They took us to a house where cots and pillows were laid out for us. The pillows were embroidered with the word 'Welcome'. We had a meal and rested for about an hour.

The Raja's manager came to meet us again at 3 p.m. He told us that the Raja's father Sir Jai Chand had married nine times and had eighteen children, but none of the children survived. A mendicant told the Raja that he should leave the palace of Lambagaon and live in a forest, only then would his child be safe. That is why Raja Jai Chand had had these houses constructed here at the foot of the Ashapuri temple and named this property Maharaj Nagar. Two of his sons thus survived, and Dhruv Dev Chand was the older one.

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We asked the Dogra to show us their old paintings. First, he brought two nayika paintings framed in glass. Both these paintings were beautiful, and good enough to be published as pictures in a book. The Raja also arrived, and we began talking. I told him that we only wanted to photograph the paintings and not take any of them away. Once bitten, twice shy, this request assured him. Some years ago, there was an officer posted in Himachal who was an art lover. Whenever he would find an old painting, he would ask the Raja for it and forget to return it. The Kings also did not dare to ask him for the paintings because he was the officer-in-charge for their area. As a result, all the Kings hid their paintings, struck by the fear of this officer. I conversed with the Raja a little more, assuring him that I was conducting research on Kangra art and history and that my research would bring a good name to the Raja as well. The Raja began to trust me and showed us many of his paintings. Some of these paintings were of Maharaja Sansar Chand and other Kings of the hills, while others portrayed 'Bara Masa' and 'Nayika Bhed'. About twenty of those paintings were exceptionally beautiful.

These paintings were hidden in red cloth bags, and before us, only Kings, their wives and children had been allowed to look at them. These Kings had great respect for art, and so they admired these paintings. They would carefully cover them in cloth bags and keep them in wooden boxes with neem leaves after looking at them. The custom of framing these paintings and hanging them on the walls had not yet begun in India. This custom came to India from England in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The colours of these paintings were shining, and they looked fresh because they were kept in the boxes in cloth bags, and not exposed to the light.

When I told him about Nurpur, I mentioned how much Ram Singh had cried when he came to know that his paintings got burned. Just like Japanese Samurai, these old Rajputs fervently love their paintings. A Japanese artist and writer named Okakura describes the love of the Japanese for their art. The famous painting of Buddha painted by Seshun was carefully preserved in the palace of King Hasokawa.

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The wooden palace caught fire. The Samurai on duty quickly went inside the burning palace and rescued the painting. He tore his shirt with his sword and used it to cover the painting. When he felt that it was impossible to get out, he tore open his stomach, kept the painting wrapped in cloth inside his stomach and lay down face-down. When the fire was doused, they found the charred corpse of the Samurai. The famous painting was found ensconced in his stomach. Even though the history of this painting is very painful, it explains how much Japanese people love their art.

Our Rajput Kings and Japanese people appreciate their art and artists like this, and compared to this, the wealthy people of today like the Punjabis feasting on puri-kachori, korma, keema, kofta and pulao, have left their art in a bad state.<sup>214</sup> I am not talking about those people who spend their lives eating bhalla-pakora, aalu-kachalu, and gol-gappas amidst flies in roadside shops.<sup>215</sup> I am referring to the rich class who have the money to open a bottle of whisky in the evening, and who play Rummy and Bridge in clubs at night and engage in Western dance. If they would spend even one-fourth of their money on paintings, art and books than on their wives' clothes and jewellery, not only would their art and culture develop but their own souls would also become sensitive enough to introspect and think about matters of a higher order.

When I lay down on the bed at night, I kept thinking about the paintings of 'Nayika Bhed' and could not sleep for a long time. I dreamt of those paintings during my sleep.

The next day, the Raja took us to Jaisinghpur and Lambagaon in his jeep. He told us about a big cave in the hills of Jaisinghpur where the Sikhs used to hide during the days of the holocausts (*ghallughara*), and during Sikh rule in Punjab, they conquered these hills and began troubling the local people. The Paharis then sought shelter in that cave with their families. Today, the cave is full of bats.

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Maharaja Sansar Chand was born in Jaisinghpur, and this site can be seen from Bijapur. A big bazaar lies in Bijapur near the stone temple of Jankinath. There is a large well near the temple, the sheer size of it is terrifying. There is a large open ground near the well where the Kings used to parade their horses. It is said that the horse of Raja Keerat Chand went out of control, it ran towards the well, and crossed it with a single, smooth jump.

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<sup>214</sup> All of these foods are rich delicacies commonly afforded by the wealthy.

<sup>215</sup> These are street foods, affordable and accessible to middle and lower-class people. Randhawa draws out class differences based on eating habits.

## Chapter 39

## Gwal Tilla

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*Khadda je teriyan pathar suneendai*  
*Jabar suneenda paani*  
*Marne te ni darna bhala preet keehan laani*

The rocks of ravines listen  
 to the water forcing its way through,  
 how will we love if we are afraid of death?

After seeing the great paintings of Maharaja Sansar Chand, we began moving towards Tira Sujanpur, which used to be the capital of the Katoch Kings. Kangra art, which was born in Haripur Guler, grew and prospered, and reached its maturation here. The unmetalled road for Sujanpur Tira cuts through the Pathankot mandi road which lies below the valley of Palampur. It passes through a town named Bhawarna; its bazaar is well-known for its hustle and bustle. Most of the shops in this marketplace are owned by the Soods. These shops sell glass bangles, mirrors, soap, combs, and many other small items required to start life anew. The people of the hills have begun appreciating these things a lot nowadays. On the left side of the road, there is a waterfall of Bhawarna, which has *baid majnu* plants on its banks. Many areas of Palampur receive water from this water channel. The younger brother of Raja Bhim Chand, Kirpal Chand, had this dug in 1690. This is the oldest channel of the Kangra valley. The icy water of the Dhauladhar descends from over Bandla village into this waterfall. This is a blessing for the farmers here, and the local people remember Kirpal Chand with a lot of love till date.

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About seven miles away, there is a temple of Triambaka Devi, around which five banyan trees have been planted. An exceptionally beautiful sight of the Dhauladhar can be seen from about one mile below this. The Chimbhar valley lies ahead, in which paddy is cultivated. In the background of the Dhauladhar, mountains with snowy peaks glisten in the rays of the sun. Clumps of mango plants on the edges of the road, and bunches of banana trees near the farmers' houses are common sights.

Couples of cranes were sitting in the paddy fields. It felt like they were watching our motorcar plying on the metalled road with great suspicion. The road reaches till the Mohal ravine, on the other side of which sandy, barren hills lie. Gwal Tilla is the most famous of these barren hills. It is said that once, a shepherd was grazing his cows here, and a beautiful woman wearing a red dupatta passed by. Besotted with the beauty of the girl, the shepherd said, "The one passing me by, the one in the red ghund is my woman."<sup>216</sup> Hearing this statement implying that a stranger was making her his bride, the girl decided to test his love and said, "Oh brave youth, if you want to become my bridegroom, then prove your love by jumping from this hill." Beset with young love, the shepherd jumped from the peak of that hill, and died as soon as he

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<sup>216</sup> *Ghund* or *ghongat* is a headscarf covering the entire face, typically worn by Hindu, Sikh and Jain women in India.



fell in the ravine. The beauty in red became so affected by this declaration of love that she also jumped from the same hill and gave up her life. A tomb commemorating these lovers was erected there. Those who pass through Gwal Tilla are always reminded of this story of the enchantment of young love, in which two strangers met for the first time and lost themselves to each other during their first meeting itself. This is a strange story of love at first sight and the people of the Kangra valley recall this story even today — sometimes with sympathy, sometimes appreciatively, and sometimes laughingly.

There is a village named Bural some miles away from this. The bazaar of this village was also very lively. The road after Bural was in an even worse state, but we kept moving and reached Alampur. This place was settled by Raja Alam Chand in 1697. There is a stone temple of Lakshmi Narayan here, which Raja Abhay Chand had constructed in 1747.

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There is an idol of *garuda* in front of the temple, its nose is like that of a parrot and it is offering obeisance to Lord Vishnu on bent knees.<sup>217</sup> The sloping walls of Raja Sansar Chand's palace face the right bank of the Beas river. There are clumps of mango trees and paddy fields around the palace.

The Beas river and its pearl-like clear water now became visible. The waters of the Beas add a unique lustre to the surrounding mountains and hills. In Punjab, many legends of love are associated with the rivers of Beas and Chenab. The legends of Heer-Ranjha, and Sohni-Mahiwal also, developed in the villages near the Chenab.

The Beas river has a special relationship with the history of the Rajputs of Kangra. The Katoch Kings constructed their forts and palaces on the banks of this river and its tributaries and distributaries. The sloping walls can be seen till date. These forts remind one of the forts of the nobles of Germany which have been constructed on the banks of the Rhine. Maharaja Sansar Chand spent his life in the villages on the banks of the Beas, and it was in these villages that the famous paintings of Kangra, in which the passion of love has been depicted multiple times, were made. In many of these paintings, one can see the Beas river from the windows of the palaces depicted. It cannot be doubted that the artists were passionate about natural beauty, and the unique loveliness of this river had great influence on them.

This river of love ballads passes through the snow of Rohtang Pass and crosses terrifying ravines and gorges to enter the Kullu valley of Manali. From Manali to Sultanpur, this river passes through the most phenomenal natural beauty, there are forests of deodar and alder trees (which has toor-like leaves) on its banks. After passing through Mandi district, this river touches the area of Molag in Rajgiri and Kangra district. A river named Binnu which emerges from the hills above Baijnath, joins it here. A river named Aawa also joins the Binnu river. There is a town named Bijapur on the right side of this area, this is where Sansar Chand was born. There is a village named Lambagaon a little below this site, where a famous noble named Sir Jai Singh, who was Sansar Chand's offspring got his haveli constructed in a mango orchard. There are many orchards of mango trees on the banks of this river. There are barren

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<sup>217</sup> *Garuda*, an eagle, is the *vaahan* or means of transportation of Lord Vishnu in Hindu mythology.

hills named Mahal Mori in front of Lambagaon, whose peaks climb on top of one another like terrifying waves.

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When one can only see the peaks of this hills from afar, this place appears lifeless. These hills have dry and barren faces. There is no forest in this area, but in the midst of these hills, there are brown patches of earth where people have built their houses. They also grow cereal crops. The dry winds which are responsible for the barren faces of these hills do not reach these patches of plain land below.

There is a village named Alampur some miles below this. The city of Sujapur lies across from this. Sujapur has a fort, palaces, and temples. Here, the Neugal river which emerges from Bandla joins the Beas river.

Before going to Sujapur, sparing some time for viewing the river will not go to waste. This river begins flowing in the south west direction, crosses volcanic mountains and enters the valley of Nadaun. Here, the Kunah and Mann rivers join it. There are many palaces belonging to the offspring of Raja Sansar Chand in Amtar. After Nadaun, the Jaswan hill range changes the course of this river yet again, and the river begins flowing in the north-south direction. The city of Jwalamukhi lies some miles below; it has a famous temple for worshipping the Goddess of fire. Dera Gopipur lies on the right bank of the river. This is a tehsil. Here, a very lovely dak-bungalow is built on the banks of the river. The city of Haripur Guler lies a few miles below on the right bank of the river, here the Banganga river meets the Beas. Here, the Gaj river also brings the waters of the Dehar stream into the Beas river. In Talwara, the western stream descends into the Beas, and then the river escapes from the hills. During winter, the river water here is truly clear. Streaming through stones and pebbles, the river makes melodious music. It feels like the water rests for a while in the interspersing lakes. These lakes are densely populated with mahseer fish. After Reh, this river divides into three distributaries and joins back into one river near Mirthal. By the time it reaches Mirthal, the river has escaped the hills as if it is savouring the freedom of the plains.

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The recently built bridge on Mirthal is a good example of clever engineering.

When the river is overflowing with water during the monsoons, all the rocks and stones on the banks are pushed forward by the force of the river, and having burst its banks, the river flows like an unbound sheet of water. Here, the force of the river is immense, and no dam can be built here without the risk of breaking. The mountains eroded by the force of the river are now submerged under it. In these days, many fearless Pahari people cross this river on *mashk*.

The road to Alampur is difficult to navigate and many ascents and descents have to be undertaken. Our jeep driver Rasil Singh, a resident of a village in Hamirpur, was a small man but was fearless and gutsy. The more terrifying the road became, the more courage he drove with. He would climb around ravines, tear through rivers; he kept stuck to the steering wheel of the jeep like a lion. He only rested when we reached the even grounds of Alampur.

Chapter 40  
**Sujanpur Tira**

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*Nagade chukki raja hede jo chadhiya  
 Baanki jihi gaddan nazri aayi  
 Char sipahi raje dad-dad bheje  
 Baahan te chukki doliye paayi*

*When the King came with his drums,  
 He saw a beautiful Gaddan;  
 He made four soldiers run after her,  
 Carry her in their arms, put her in a  
 palanquin.*

We reached Sujanpur Tira after crossing the Beas and climbing a few stone steps. This town was founded by Raja Ghumand Chand in 1761; he got many beautiful buildings constructed here. This town was developed by his grandson Sansar Chand even further. A Shiva-Parvati temple named Narabdeswar lies on the outskirts of the town on the banks of the Beas. This temple was built by Rani Suketan, the wife of Raja Sansar Chand. The paintings on the walls of this temple are said to have been painted by the royal artists of Sansar Chand. Some of the paintings depict Sansar Chand and his Rani Suketan. Some paintings depict scenes from the Ramayana, Mahabharata and Bhagwad Gita. Many animals like elephants, twelve-antlered deer, and horses, among others, are painted on these walls. These paintings on the roof and walls where human hands cannot reach, maintain their original colours. The paintings on the lower parts of the walls have been dirtied by the hands of pilgrims. The pilgrims often touch the paintings with their fingers. A Durga idol of red stone lies behind the temple.

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In this idol, Goddess Durga is shown killing Mahishasur. When we entered the temple, we saw a Brahmin priest, his white cap decorated with peacock feathers, worshipping the Goddess.

Another unique feature of Sujanpur Tira is its large open ground. Large open grounds cannot be found anywhere else in these hills. The Kings' armies used to parade here. At the edge of the ground, there is a Krishna temple built by Sansar Chand.

This is a fine building. The idols of Krishna and Radha in *basanti* (saffron-yellow) colour look very appealing. The names of the masons who built this temple have been engraved on a stone plate — they were named Misru and Bakru and they belonged to Nadaun.

Raja Sansar Chand's palace is situated on a hill in the upper part of the town. One has to walk through a corridor to reach this palace, and the path is very rocky. Windows shaped like elephants are built on both sides of the vestibule. There is a durbar hall on the right side with twenty-two doors. One can see the Beas river, Sujanpur, and the rest of the beautiful area from here. The roof of this palace has collapsed, and it looks like the whole building will fall in a few years. It is said that each Raja used to sit at each door, and so twenty-two kings conferred, and gathered to show regard to the Maharaja. There is a small pond under this hall, which used to be dyed in red during the festival of Holi when the people of Sujanpur used to play Holi with the Raja. There was a Gauri-Shankar temple on the left side which was built in 1810. It had human-sized idols of Shiva and Parvati which Sansar Chand used to worship.

A Chamunda Devi temple above the durbar hall has been whitewashed. It shines in the sunlight. One can see the hills of Mandi in the east, and the dry region of Hamirpur in the south. This temple was the first building erected by Raja Ghumand Chand. One of the paintings on the walls of this temple depicts high and low peaks looking like a caravan of camel humps. It is possible that the artists of Sansar Chand found similarities between this scene and the Kailash mountain.

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There used to be palaces of the Queens on one side of this palace, but they fell long ago, and now these ruins only have lush green grass growing out of them.

The history of the Katoch kings is also embedded in old stories, like other Rajputs who trace their ancestry to solar or lunar lineages. The Katoch Rajputs believe that they are descendants of Susharman. Susharman has been mentioned in the legend of the Mahabharata. This family was initially settled in Multan. After the battle of Kurukshetra, they lost their land in Multan and migrated to the Jalandhar area; they got the Kangra fort constructed while residing in Jalandhar. The Western part of Kangra was also called Katoch. At that time, there were two more districts in the Kangra valley — Changar and Palam. A number of dry hills lie to the south of Changar and Palam. A fertile area with terraced tea gardens and paddy farms exists to the north of Palam, between Kangra and Baijnath.

Maharaja Sansar Chand is the most popular Raja of Kangra. His father Teg Chand only ruled for a year. There is nothing of special note about his reign, but his great-grandfather Ghumand Chand is known as a very brave Raja. The Mughal empire was deteriorating during those times. Ahmed Shah Durrani ruled over Punjab then, and he appointed Ghumand Chand as the governor of the Jalandhar Doaba. This is how Ghumand Chand became the Raja of the area between the Satluj and Ravi rivers. He took away the area of Palam from the Raja of Chamba. In one of the paintings held by the Raja of Lambagaon, Dhruv Dev Chand and Ghumand Chand are shown praying on the banks of the Beas. Musicians are shown playing musical instruments in one corner. The Raja's family members and courtiers are shown sitting in front of him; the courtiers' beards are trimmed like Muslims. His grandson Sansar Chand is also shown standing among them. Ghumand Chand is depicted with a stern expression. The Beas river is shown flowing in the background. This painting can be found in Sujampur, and is the oldest example of Kangra art.

Sansar Chand became the new Raja when he was ten years old. There were disturbances in Punjab. Durrani was unable to sustain his dominance. The Sikh *misls* became free of external control; they now fixed their ambitions onto the hill states.

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Sansar Chand summoned a huge army comprising Rohilla, Afghan and Rajput warriors and made all the enemy forces bow before him. In one of the paintings belonging to the Raja of Lambagaon, Sansar Chand and his brothers are shown riding horses — Fateh Chand is to his left, while his younger brother Maan Chand is to his right. Maan Chand is riding a pony (*tattu*).

Servants holding fans of peacock feathers stand behind the brothers. Sansar Chand can be easily distinguished from his brothers because he is portrayed as a tall and strong man.

Sansar Chand is considered the bravest Raja of the Kangra valley. Mr. Barnes writes that the name earned by Sansar Chand has not been matched by any of his descendants. He took action as per his decisions. He maintained peace in the hill states while Mughal rule was in decline. Since there was peace and tranquillity in the hill states during his reign, many intellectuals settled here, and this region became a fountainhead of art. Ghulam Mahaodin writes in Taarikh Punjab that Sansar Chand was a fortunate raja, he was kind-hearted and greatly loved by his subjects. His subjects used to consider him as majestic as a tiger. His admiration for intellectuals and artists was akin to that of Akbar. Skilled people like artists, soldiers, and those from other walks of life settled in the Kangra valley because of the gracious Maharaja's welcoming policy. Satisfied with the privileges the Maharaja extended them, these skilled individuals often composed creative output in his honour. He would also gift them material rewards. The singers and Bhattas were greatly appreciated. Some recall him as a just Raja, while others miss him as a warrior.

This peace of the Kangra valley was destroyed by the attack of the Gurkhas in 1805. Amar Singh Thapa brought forty thousand soldiers and attacked this valley. They defeated Sansar Chand in Mahal Mohriyaan, and Sansar Chand took his family into hiding in the Kangra fort. The valley became so disturbed by the attack of the Gurkhas that nobody sowed even a single seed of food grains. Weeds began festering in the streets of towns and tigers began roaming around in the bazaar of Nadaun.

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They asked Maharaja Ranjit Singh for help. In 1809, the Sikh armies defeated the Gurkhas. After this, the Sikh armies began residing in the Kangra fort alongside Sansar Chand's armies, and Sansar Chand became a vassal of Ranjit Singh. He would visit the Maharaja in Lahore once a year. After capturing the fort, many of its paintings came into the hands of the Sikhs. Some of them are held by Sant Prakash Singh, a Sikh from Alawalpur, today. In one of them, Sansar Chand is shown sitting in the court of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. His beard is now white with age, and one cannot see his former glory on his face.

A British tourist, William Moorcroft, wrote an interesting account of the Kangra valley in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. William Moorcroft was a veterinarian. He was appointed by the East India Company to care for the army horses in Bengal. He came to Ranjit Singh's durbar in 1820 and presented an English pistol to the Raja. The Maharaja appreciated the weapons and so gave him permission to tour the Himalayas. Moorcroft lived for some time in Tira Sujanpur, and then passed through Mandi and Kullu to move towards Ladakh. He spent a lot of time with Maharaja Sansar Chand in Sujanpur Tira in 1820. He saved his younger brother Fateh Chand's life from a terrifying illness, and these two became so grateful that they presented a *siropa* to him, apart from gifting him a jagir. Not only this, Fateh Chand also bound himself to him in brotherhood. Moorcroft talks about this experience like this: "When Fateh Chand agreed, he exchanged his turban with my cap. He kept his turban on my head and kept my cap on his head. Then we shook hands. Then we took some money and twirled it around each other's heads in blessing, and then distributed it amongst servants. He also gave me some rough grass, and not

caring about caste, class, and race, he made me a member of Sansar Chand's family. This might not mean much, but it is obvious that he proved his gratitude in an incomparable way."

Moorcroft has written a lot about Sansar Chand's family and their everyday life: "I went to meet him in the evening upon being called. The Raja was walking with his son and grandson in a vast garden.

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Raja Sansar Chand is tall and healthy. He must be about sixty years old. He is dark-skinned but has sharp and soft facial features. His son, Rai Anirudh Chand, is very handsome, his face is fair skinned, but his body is too fat. His two children are less fair than the father. Some time back, Sansar Chand was the most powerful raja in the region between the Satluj and the Ravi. Kings from the Satluj to Kashmir were his vassals. He had endless wealth. He used to get around thirty-five lakh Rupees annually, just from tax. Now this raja has become poor, and he fears that Maharaja Ranjit Singh can take over his kingdom anytime. All his troubles are a result of his own decisions. As he loses his power and sinks in adversity, Maharaja Ranjit Singh gains in his neighbourhood."

Talking about the everyday life of the Raja, Moorcroft writes, "Raja Sansar Chand spends the mornings in prayer. Then he meets officials and courtiers from 10 am to 12 noon. Before I arrived, he used to spend this time in a small bungalow, which he then vacated for me to live in. This bungalow is on the outer side of the garden. The Raja rests for two to three hours in the afternoon. He then plays chess for some time and enjoys song and dance in the evening. The singers often sing praises about Lord Krishna in the Braj language. Sansar Chand is fond of art, and he maintains many artists in his palace. He has a large collection of paintings. Many of these paintings depict the courage of Krishna and Balrama. Some of these paintings also depict Arjuna, and other scenes of the Mahabharata. This collection also has portraits of neighbouring kings and Sansar Chand's ancestors. Two of these paintings depict Alexander the Great; Rai Anirudh Chand gifted one of them to me. The portrait depicts Alexander as a General with very handsome facial features. His red-brown hair falls to his shoulders and he has an iron helmet on his head which has real pearls attached to its edges. The rest of Alexander's clothes are similar to the clothing style of South Asians. The Raja does not know where he got this portrait from. It appears that this painting was being passed down in their family generation after generation."

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One question that has not been answered yet is: where was Sansar Chand's large collection of paintings kept? When Maharaja Ranjit Singh conquered the Kangra valley, the glory of Sansar Chand's fort was diminished, but the art remained. After Chand died, his art collection was distributed amongst three families. Some paintings went to his brother Fateh Chand's share; this brother had begun living in Lambagaon. Some went to his son Jodhbir. Jodhbir was Sansar Chand's offspring from a beautiful Gaddi woman. His Nadaun descendants sold their paintings through traders in Amritsar and Bombay, and through this trade, these paintings left the shores of India and found themselves in museums in different parts of the world. Dr. Coomaraswamy

bought some fine paintings from the Amritsar-based art dealer Radha Kishan Bharani, and these are now part of the art collection of Boston. Some of these have been found in the Bhartiya Kala Bhawan in Varanasi, some in the Municipal Museum of Allahabad, some in Lahore Museum, some in London's Victoria and Albert Museum, and some in Paris. Some paintings are present in people's private collections as well. These include Bombay's J.D. Modi, Ahmedabad's Kasturbhai Lalbhai, Patna's Radha Krishan Jalan, Kolkata's Gopi Krishan Kanoriya, these are some of the known names who possess these paintings. Kangra's established lawyer, Shri Maan Chand Uppal took some paintings and rough sketches for his Nadaun household. Shri Uppal's collection has a small painting in the Persian style, which is a unique example of beauty and softness. This proves that Sansar Chand's artists were aware of the Mughal style of painting.

Mian Ram Singh had the largest collection of Kangra paintings. He is Ranbir Chand's great grandson. After the defeat of Kangra, Sansar Chand lived in Alampur for a long time. It is said that he had demolished the Sujampur palace on the peak of the hill with his own hands, so that Ranjit Singh could not conquer it. Maharaja Ranjit Singh had heard a lot of praise about this palace. It seems more plausible that Sansar Chandra left the palace of Tira because it was newly built and leaving and entering it was difficult. This is the reason why he began living on the banks of the Beas, in a fertile tract of Alampur. He died in December 1823 and he was succeeded by Anirudh Chand.

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Maharaja Ranjit Singh's Prime Minister Dhyani Singh wanted to get his son Heera Singh married to Anirudh Chand's sister. Even though Anirudh Chand agreed to this demand to save his life, he considered this very demeaning, and the moment he returned to Nadaun, he gathered his and his sister's belongings and went to the British-governed territories. He took a lot of paintings with him. Finally, he reached Tehri-Garhwal, where he got both his sisters married to the raja.

After living in Haridwar for four years, Anirudh Chand died in Tehri-Garhwal. He left two sons, Ranbir Chand and Pramod Chand, behind. Upon being asked by the British agent of Ludhiana, Maharaja Ranjit Singh called Ranbir Chand and Pramod Chand to Punjab and gave them a jagir worth 50,000 Rupees in Mahal Mohriyaan. These two brothers now began living in Karoohin village. Here, they found a British traveller named Vigne in 1835. Pramod Chand died without any offspring, but Ranbir Chand had one sirtoda. The sirtoda is that son who is born of a servant woman's womb. He was named Pradhan Chand. Pradhan Chand's grandson Ram Singh has the most Kangra paintings. It is said that when Barnes had to decide about their jagir, then Pradhan Chand said, give me Sansar Chand's hooka and prayer utensils, and then you may even give the jagir to the other group of descendants. Ram Singh's father Bhawani Singh began living in Sansar Chand's palace in Alampur, but because of poverty, his sons Ram Singh and Devi Singh left for Bhawarna because they were unable to maintain and repair the palace. Ram Singh was a serious and wise man; he knew about the true value of his treasure. He had carefully preserved his paintings. He had around 110 paintings about Shiva and Parvati's life, 174 paintings about Durga's miracles, and 26 paintings of court scenes of Raja Sansar Chand. Punjab's premier artist Sardar Sobha Singh had told me about his collection.

Ram Singh also has one painting of Nawab Kalb-i-Ali Khan, whose grandfather Ghulam Muhammad Khan had sought shelter and security with Maharaja Sansar Chand. Nawab Kalb Ali Khan had gifted a jagir of 200 Rupees per month to Mian Pradhan Chand. This jagir was broken up only recently. After the jagir was broken up, Mian Ram Singh was forced to sell his collection of paintings. Paintings of Shiva, Parvati and Durga have been bought by the Punjab government for its Kala Kendra in Chandigarh.

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This way, the biggest collection of Kangra paintings remained in Punjab so that Punjabis can seek inspiration from this and greatly savour this art.

We were returning from Sujanpur and saw the whole road full of marriage processions. We found about fifteen processions on the way. Carrying palanquins is a custom here even today, and brides with nose-pins were staring at us with interest, especially at Mr. Archer — who is this stranger, their eyes seemed to ask. Women wearing colourful clothes, their faces decorated with nose-pins, had filled the whole road with their processions. It felt like we were being welcomed by a flood of Kangra women. Many pretty faces, sharp noses, round chins, shy eyes, and tall heights reminded us of the beautiful women in Kangra paintings. The Kangra artists would have sought inspiration from this beauty around them to etch the women in their appealing paintings. These women of Kangra not only decorated the valley but also gifted beauty to this art, which will remain eternally lovely for the times to come.



## Chapter 41 **The Discovery of Guler Paintings**

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It was dawn. We boarded a small metre gauge train from Pathankot station. The train slowly entered the beautiful valley of Kangra after leaving the plains behind. It is pleasurable to travel on a metalled road but journeying via train is a different experience altogether — one should try both experiences. There were small hills and sloping farms on both sides of the train. While some farms had orange and *galgal* orchards, others had corn and *charhi* plants. We saw boys and girls standing on raised platforms in the farms to shoo away crows and parrots who were intent on destroying the corn crop. This land, where a railway line has also been laid, had an unmetalled road some years ago which was used by Mughal and Sikh armies to attack this area.

The snowy peaks of the Dhauladhar could be occasionally seen through the grilled windows of the train. If such picturesque scenes could be seen in a European country, the railway department would certainly install huge glass windows in the train to enable passengers to view the hills. There are no incidents of theft here, so I do not know which officer blindly copied the design of trains in the plains and got grills fixed in all the windows of this train.

The railway line gradually climbed upwards; the train pushed into the small railway station of Guler. Upon reaching the station, I could not hide my amazement because I was at the place where Kangra art was born!

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We left the train to see the fort of Haripur on top of the hill at the banks of the Banganga river, it towered magnificently over the landscape. Looking at the fort, one feels that this must have been a strong centre of influence.

The Banganga is a wide choe-like monsoon river; it had no water when we arrived. We reached the town of Haripur by crossing the river on large wooden planks. Baldev Singh, the Raja of Guler, wore a zari cloak and white churidar pyjama, he had tied a Benarsi-style turban on his head. He was waiting for our arrival. Ten to twelve servants stood behind him. Bisambar Das introduced me and Archer to him, and we expressed our pleasure at meeting him. Archer looked at his nose and told him that he looked like one of his ancestors Raja Govardhan Chand, which was correct. The Raja also appreciated this.

We walked on a path of round pebbles to reach the town. The path was shaded by banyan and peepal trees. Round platforms were constructed around every tree. The walls of the houses were made of white and grey circular stones. Haripur appears to be a quiet town like the sleepy hollows of Rip Van Winkle. It had a bazaar behind a big pond. We saw many old temples on the way and reached a large ground after passing through the bazaar. The kings used to play polo in this ground. There is a dak-bungalow at one of the corners of this ground while the remaining corners have old temples.

We arrived close to the fort. The walls of this fort have developed huge cracks which peepal trees have grown through. We came to know that the 1905 earthquake had caused this destruction to the fort. Even though most of the fort is dilapidated, it continues to be the seat

of power ruling over Haripur. We climbed down from our horses and looked at the town from this spot. There was a Durga temple on top of the hill right across from us. A lion statue lies at the entrance of the temple. Reaching the temple requires one to climb a very steep slope, so only the bravest pilgrims reach it. One can often see newly-weds or people who have asked for special blessings (*mannat*) climb to this temple when their wishes are fulfilled.

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The Banganga can be seen flowing from a platform outside this fort. We reached the houses comprising the current residence of Raja Baldev Singh after viewing the dilapidated palaces of the fort. The raja arranged for us to stay in a spacious room. There was a carpet on the floor and white pillows and sheets were kept on it. We removed our shoes, sat on the carpet, and asked Bisambar Das to request the Raja for his art collection. The Raja sent us a message saying that we should eat first and then view the paintings. We rested for a while after lunch but continued to desire seeing the old paintings. At around 3 o'clock, the Raja sent four big cloth bags containing the paintings, to us. The Raja was an art lover and was quite knowledgeable about the history of those paintings. He had inscribed the theme of the painting and the date it was painted, in Urdu, behind every painting. Most of the paintings were of the kings and queens of the area, most of them portrayed Raja Govardhan Chand. This shows that the Raja encouraged this art to such an extent, that the artists responded favourably by recording his image faithfully. Some paintings were themed around the Leela of Radha-Krishna. We were viewing those paintings when Bisambar Das brought a message from Tikka Sahib saying that we must especially see some paintings depicting love and passion between humans.<sup>218</sup> The Tikka Sahib was drunk and locked in another room, the Raja did not wish for us to meet him in that condition.

After some time, the Raja sent us another cloth-bag containing the paintings the Tikka Sahib had mentioned. Those paintings were aesthetically beautiful; they had been specifically chosen to be shown to Archer. We evaluated those paintings and informed the Raja of the value at which we could procure them. He accepted our offer and we bought them for Punjab Museum.

These paintings tell us that they were not influenced by the Vaishnava religion alone, legends of love from Punjab also influenced the artists. One can find paintings of Heer-Ranjha, Mirza-Sahiban and Sohni-Mahiwal among them. Mirza is carrying a spear and riding a horse, while Sahiban is sitting among her friends and spinning yarn on a wheel. Sahiban is so enamoured of Mirza that she forgets to spin the wheel, she acts like a snake hypnotized by a snake-charmer. Sohni is shown swimming in the Chenab river while Mahiwal is shown herding buffaloes on the other bank of the river. Mahiwal is playing the *algoza* to pass his time.

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<sup>218</sup> Tikka Sahib: The prince, Raja's son and successor.

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A beautiful and painful scene depicts a Pahari love story. A princess is shown bathing behind a cloth-curtain and snowy peaks can be seen in the background. The cloth of the curtain is thin and translucent, one can see the beautiful body of the princess through it. A boy from the Doom caste is standing in the corner and staring at the bathing princess. It is said that that boy fell in love with the princess and they both eloped. The other side of the painting shows what happened to the Doom boy after that elopement. The Raja's soldiers followed the couple and killed them with their arrows. The Raja is shown sitting on a platform and watching this scene, he is shown to be sad at the death of his daughter but is also upset with her. The artist has beautifully expressed conflicting sorrow and anger on the Raja's face.

We asked the Raja if anybody else had seen this art collection before us. He told us that in 1929, Mr. French visited him, he was the first art expert to create awareness about Guler art through his book *Himalayan Art*.<sup>219</sup> After him, a Financial Commissioner from Punjab named Mr. Latifi visited him and the Raja gifted him some of his paintings. After that, the paintings were locked up in thick wooden boxes and never shown to any other officer. This was why those paintings could be found in Guler.

After looking at the paintings, we went to visit the residential area on the upper side of the hill. Planting banana trees in households is a common practice, banana trees are often found painted in Guler art. A big pond lies ahead. It is surrounded by temples at every corner and bound by banyan and peepal trees. A very vibrant and clear view of the valley can be seen from here; there is a water mill on the banks of the river.

The sun had set, and the hills hid in the dark. We stayed for one night in the dak-bungalow. News of our arrival had spread in Haripur, as a result, many men and schoolboys from the town were sitting in the veranda of the bungalow and waiting for us to arrive. They were not interested in art, but they wanted to talk to me about the needs and problems of the town. They requested me to establish a college there, and get a bridge built over the Banganga because it became difficult to cross it and reach the other side during the rainy season. It was impossible to build a college at such a small site, but I instead thought of establishing a library and small art gallery there.

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The library could contain books about Kangra, and the paintings used to illustrate those books could be framed and placed in the art gallery. This would make the local public aware of the value of Kangra art.

After listening to their needs, we requested them to perform Pahari songs for us. One boy sang a song about a mother waking up her son, saying that the sun has risen and so he should get up and study well. This way, he would become a minister and fly in an aeroplane. India's independence has filled people's hearts with exaltation and enthusiasm. Before independence, people could only think of becoming soldiers and nothing else. Illiterate boys could either wash utensils or cook food. Due to independence, education spread far and wide,

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<sup>219</sup> See <https://www.worldcat.org/title/himalayan-art/oclc/2344921> to access a copy.

and this newfound knowledge has illuminated paths towards many jobs. This wave of progress has also benefitted the people of Kangra.

We took our leave from the residents of Haripur, had dinner, and went off to sleep. I soaked my feet in a bucket of hot water, ridding myself of the exhaustion of the busy day. I wiped my legs and feet and curled myself under a quilt. The quilt gave me warmth and comfort. How can people who use blankets understand the comfort of a quilt? I hate blankets, the comfort and warmth one can get from a quilt can never be gained from a blanket, no matter where they have been made. I missed my quilt a lot during my two year stay in the cold in London. I used to pity the British. I used to consider them stupid for making an envelope with a blanket and bedsheet, placing it on the mattress and sleeping in it. I am sure that us rural Punjabis have better eating and sleeping habits than them. I went to bed with these thoughts, recalled the painting of the Doom boy and the princess, and drifted off to sleep.

## Chapter 42 **The History of Guler Paintings**

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In order to understand these paintings, becoming familiar with the history of Guler is essential. Raja Hari Chand established his capital at Guler in 1405. The raja of Kangra, Raja Hari Chand had left Kangra in very strange circumstances. It is said that the raja was hunting with his companions when he saw a wild boar and began following it to hunt it. The boar kept eluding him, the raja kept following. Night fell, and he got separated from his companions. He lost the way and fell into an open well along with his horse. Some time later, a trader passed by with a herd of mules to sell. The trader rescued him from the well. However, because of the absence of the raja, his younger brother had assumed kingship by that time, and his queens had committed sati.<sup>220</sup>

When Hari Chand became aware of this, he decided to not return to Kangra. He came to Haripur and established a new capital. It is said that a cowherd used to graze his cows where the fort now stands. One day, the cowherd saw a tiger and a goat drinking water from a spring together. When Hari Chand reached there, the cowherd showed him that place. Whenever a large building, and especially a fort was built, it would be preceded by an animal sacrifice (*bali*). It is said that the same cowherd was sacrificed, and his head was buried in the foundation of the fort. That is why Guler was formerly called Gwaler.<sup>221</sup>

Hari Chand had many descendants who did not have any unique incidents during their reigns.

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Let us understand the history of Guler and its kings from the 17<sup>th</sup> century onwards. From Rup Chand to Vikram Singh, the kings of Guler had very good relations with the Mughal rulers. Rup Chand (1610) assisted Emperor Jahangir's Mughal army in attacking the fort of Kangra, and the Mughal Emperor gifted him an elephant and a horse. After this, this raja became a vassal of the Emperor, and the Emperor sent him to Southern India on a campaign. After Jahangir, Shah Jahan sent Rup Chand to Garhwal on a military campaign in 1634, and this campaign was where Rup Chand lost his life. Rup Chand's son Man Singh (1635) also worked for Shah Jahan and continued fighting for the Emperor in the North-East. He then joined Aurangzeb's forces as well and participated in the battle of Qandahar in 1647. His son Vikram Singh was a burly man. It is said that he could break coconuts by pressing them with his fingers.

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<sup>220</sup> *Sati*: A Hindu practice (now banned) where widowed women immolate themselves. This immolation is meant to be a declaration of their chastity and devotion to their husbands like the mythical *Sati*, daughter of Daksha Prajapati, who was married to Lord Shiva and immolated herself because her father dishonoured her husband. In pre-colonial times, the social reformer Raja Rammohan Roy campaigned against this practice because many widows were also forcibly burnt on their husbands' funeral pyres. It was abolished by the colonial government in 1829.

<sup>221</sup> The name *Gwaler* comes from *Gwala* or cowherd.

During the reign of Dalip Singh, many Hindu artists who used to work in the Mughal durbar, got displaced because of the attack by Nadir Shah. Many of them reached these hill kingdoms. The Mughal Sultanate had weakened by then, so Nadir Shah's attack in 1739 created a lot of chaos in Delhi, the capital of the Mughal empire. Thousands of city-dwellers were killed, and many fled to the hill regions of Rajasthan and Punjab. These also included some Hindu artists. From among these old artists, one can find paintings by Pandit Seu, and his sons Nainsukh and Manaku. It can be determined that Kangra art originated from these artists' work in Haripur-Guler. Nainsukh went to Jammu in 1748; he worked for Raja Balwant Dev there. In one painting, Raja Vikram Singh is shown sitting on an elephant in the style of Mughal paintings. This painting can be found in the Punjab Museum, Chandigarh nowadays. Another painting shows Raja Dalip Singh playing polo. The raja and his companions are painted in Mughal garb, they are wearing cloaks and their headscarves are straight. In this painting, the raja looks like Akbar.

The paintings of men and horses have been created with great care. This painting is a good example of people playing polo, the players' facial expressions show how they are passionately involved in the game, and their desire to hit the ball can be very clearly inferred from how they have been painted.

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The horses' postures appear to show great speed and power. This painting has all the unique features one can find in Mughal paintings.

There is another painting of Raja Govardhan Chand. The raja sits atop an elephant in Mughal style. The elephant has been elaborately decorated and the mahout has his beard trimmed in the Mughal style. This painting is a good example of the Mughal style of painting as per the style of art, and scene portrayed.

The paintings created in Guler during the reign of Govardhan Chand (1743-1773) clearly show the evolution of Kangra art. This evolution was aided by the location of Guler near the plains, and by the relations of the kings of Guler with the Mughal rulers. This is why Guler is the birthplace of Kangra art and the oldest Kangra paintings were created in Guler itself. Mr. William Archer has rightly said, "Guler is not just one centre out of the thirty-eight centres of hill art, in fact, it is the birthplace of a specific class of Punjab's hill paintings." Guler did not only give birth to delicacy in its local art, in fact, when this art reached its zenith in 1790, it became famous as 'Kangra art'.

Now we will talk about those paintings which are considered as Kangra art. There is one painting of Raja Govardhan Chand in which, wearing saffron clothes, the raja is shown sitting on his famous horse. The painting has a red background. Govardhan Chand's horse was greatly appreciated by the Nawab of Jalandhar, Adina Beg. Beg asked Chand for his horse, but Chand refused. They fought, resulting in the defeat of Adina Beg, and this famous horse remained with Raja Govardhan Chand. In olden times, horses were considered very precious. Maharaja Ranjit Singh loved his horse Laili more than his life, and he had decorated its saddle with diamonds and gemstones worth 30 lakh Rupees.

There is another beautiful painting of Raja Govardhan Chand in which he is shown sitting in the midst of a courtly concert of music — this painting is unique because of its choice

of colours and delicacy of posture. It is painted in a simple style — the raja is shown sitting in a portico over the Banganga and smoking hookah. One of the courtiers sitting with the raja looks like a mendicant from Tibet.

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According to Raja Baldev Singh, this courtier was a mahant from Pindori. The raja is wearing a saffron cloak and the cloaks worn by the courtiers have been painted in different colours and styles. The *shehnai* and nagara players are also shown wearing colourful clothes.<sup>222</sup> The nagaras are also covered with yellow cloth. A group of green trees standing under the terrace blesses this scene with endless beauty. This painting carries the characteristic elements of Mughal and Kangra paintings. The raja is listening to music and it appears as though a strange intoxication pervades the air. This painting can favourably compare with the best paintings of the Mughal style of art. It has a delicate, fragile feeling, a spiritual colour, which cannot be found in Mughal paintings. The Kangra paintings of this era have extremely attractive colour schemes. It is as if Kangra painters have an abundance of scenes of dawn and seven-coloured rainbows in their palette.

In another painting, Raja Govardhan Chand appears older, he has his light-eyed rani and children next to him. The raja is shown offering sweets to his son Kunwar Prakash Chand. Two sirtoda are shown sitting on the mat. The sirtoda is that child who is born of a servant woman. From the perspective of the evolution of Kangra art, it is very interesting to know that Raja Govardhan Chand's rani was from the Basohli kingdom. Basohli had been a centre of Rajput art since 1678. There, this art form began during Raja Kirpal Pal's reign (1678) and reached its zenith during the reign of Modni Pal (1725). The colours and style of Basohli paintings are central to the initial paintings from Guler.

What are the means of identifying and differentiating between Kangra art and Mughal art? Both styles have detailed and fine line figures. However, Kangra paintings portray mountains, rivers, and forests, but one can only see the Northern plains in Mughal paintings. The love for nature immortalised in Kangra art is absent in Mughal art. The primary indication of Kangra paintings is that it is a Hindu style of art, and emphasis on the Vaishnava sect and devotion for Lord Krishna's *prem leela* (romance) can be found in this form. Love and devotion for Lord Krishna has made Kangra painting exceptionally beautiful. In Mughal paintings, one can only see the Mughal Emperors or their courtiers, and in some cases, scenes of the hunt; the Emperor's wives and harems have also been portrayed. Court paintings can never be elevated art because they smell of sycophancy. The artist can give birth to elevated art only when his mind is free, and there is no other aim for him to create art other than giving joy to himself. This freedom can be clearly seen in Guler paintings, and the fine lines drawing these paintings appear like they are making music.

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<sup>222</sup> Musical instruments, the *shehnai* is a wind instrument while the *nagara* is a large drum.

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Prakash Chand became the ruler of Guler in 1773. In one painting, which is probably associated with Raja Govardhan Chand's reign, Prakash Chand is shown with his brother Parakram Chand. Guler art immensely grew during Prakash Chand's reign, and the quality of art from this time period is of an extremely high level. Many paintings portray the raja's household affairs. One painting is that of Raja Prakash Chand's rani, Shrimati Ananti Devi of Chamba. The rani sits with her son Bhup Singh, they are surrounded by servant women. One servant woman is shown giving toys to Bhup Singh. Two *Marasi* women are shown playing the sitar and *dholak* on the banks of the pond. One servant is feeding grain to a parrot in a cage. A monkey is shown drinking water from a fountain. White and yellow flowers and the women's colourful clothes bless this painting with an extraordinary presence. Raja Prakash Chand was a squanderer. It is said that he was known for a strange whim — tearing strips of cloth and distributing them among his subjects. He found great pleasure in the act of tearing cloth. His expenditure would always exceed his income and he often depended on taking loans from moneylenders. Haripur's Avtara Brahmin was one of his special moneylenders. In one painting, Raja Prakash Chand is shown sitting in Avtara, the moneylender's home. The white-bearded raja is smoking the hookah, and Avtara's son is offering laddoos to Prakash Chand's son Bhup Singh. It is said that a fight broke out between the raja and the moneylender due to disagreements about settlements of accounts. The raja decided that he and the moneylender should be tied to a peepal tree. Both of them were tied to the peepal tree, and at night, a branch from the tree fell on the moneylender's head. The moneylender collapsed there and then, proving that the raja was right, and the moneylender had been lying.

Raja Prakash Chand's Prime Minister Dhyan Singh was known for his wisdom and smart work ethic. He managed the political affairs of the kingdom. In many of the paintings belonging to the later phase of Raja Prakash Chand's reign, Dhyan Singh has been portrayed as the Prime Minister. In one painting, Dhyan Singh

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is shown holding a bow and following Kunwar Bhup Singh. Bhup Singh has set off for viewing his father's kingdom along with Dhyan Singh. Their parade has flag-bearers carrying flags. The prince has reached near a village and the nagara player is informing all and sundry about this news by beating his nagara and announcing the prince's arrival. A servant holding a peacock feather fan stands behind Bhup Singh. He is followed by many servants with hawks in their hands.

In another painting, Dhyan Singh is shown hunting with Bhup Singh. He has released an arrow towards a deer. On the other side, Bhup Singh's brother-in-law Naurang Patial is slashing through a wild boar with his sword. A servant is being attacked by a tiger. Many servants carry recently killed wild boars on their shoulders in the background. This painting is very interesting.

Because of some disagreement with Raja Prakash Chand, Dhyan Singh, the Prime Minister, left Guler in 1785. This Prime Minister captured the fortress of Kotla and established himself as raja. Dhyan Singh became so powerful that Sansar Chand was unable to reclaim the fortress of Kotla despite being in the flush of youth, and Dhyan Singh kept ruling over this



fortress for many years. Finally, Sardar Desa Singh Majithia took this fortress away from Dhyan Singh's nephew Kishan Singh. Maharaja Ranjit Singh gifted Kishan Singh a jagir of twenty-seven villages comprising Mirthal. Maharaja Ranjit Singh used to give 8 annas as daily pay to Kishan Singh's youngest son Amar Singh, who was also called 'Daarhi-wala' (The bearded one), for his long and beautiful beard. This way the tradition of trimmed Mughlai beards declined, and the custom of keeping long, flowing beards emerged. The older paintings of Guler which belong to the reign of Raja Govardhan Chand were in the possession of a retired army officer named Captain Sundar Singh, who was a descendant of Prime Minister Dhyan Singh. Now these paintings are held by the Punjab Museum.

Bhup Singh became raja in 1790. He was the last raja of Guler. It is evident from many paintings from his reign that he was a passionate admirer of art like his father, and he wholeheartedly helped artists. In one beautiful painting, Bhup Singh is shown sitting with his rani and son Shamsher Singh. The raja and rani are sitting on a *moodi*. Bhup Singh's son is sitting in his lap. There are banana trees in the background, which can often be seen in Guler paintings. The Guler paintings made after 1815 tend to belong to the Sikh style of art.

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In these paintings, the people's beards are uncut, and their headdress is worn in a specific style. Ranjit Singh captured Guler in 1813. The Maharaja asked Bhup Singh to assist him in his conflict against Pathans, and when Guler was emptied, he called Bhup Singh to Lahore. He sent Desa Singh Majithia with an army of ten thousand Sikhs to capture Guler. He gave the displaced raja a jagir worth 20,000 Rupees for his expenses. In a painting belonging to the last days of Bhup Singh's reign, one can clearly see the influence of the Sikh style of art. Bhup Singh is sitting on a portico. The Banganga is flowing below, and Minister Ghanta Khatri is shown standing before him. All their clothes are like those worn by Sikhs.

After Bhup Singh, Shamsher Singh became raja in 1826. In one painting, Shamsher Singh is shown playing with his uncle. The uncle is bent like a horse, and his nephew sits atop his back. This painting explains how kings' sons were pampered. When the Sikhs lost in the first Anglo-Sikh war, Shamsher Singh removed them from his territory. This raja died in 1873.

Because Shamsher Singh had not left behind any son before dying, his brother Jai Singh became raja in 1877. In a painting relating to the times of Raja Shamsher Singh, Jai Singh is shown with his mother. His mother Rani Chambial is shown participating in a *yagna* which the court's tailor has organised. The tailor is shown sitting near the havan and offering *ahuti* to it, a Brahmin priest in white clothes sits next to him. There is a book in his hands from which he is reading out prayers. Some Mirasi women are sitting in front and singing. All paintings of men and women portray them with delicacy and skill, and it appears that the court painters of this court also possessed the artistic abilities of earlier artists. In another painting, the marriage procession of Raja Jai Singh has been painted. This painting explicitly shows the influence of the Sikh style of art. In another painting, Raja Jai Singh is shown sitting in a *mujra*, the dancers have not been painted as naturalistically as they should have been. In another painting, Raja Jai Singh is shown with his son prince Raghunath Singh. This painting is the best example of Guler art.

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The raja, his son, and servants, are all wearing magnificent clothes and their headdresses have embedded pearls. The decline of this art becomes visible in all this magnificence and glory. It appears that Guler art began declining from this moment.

This art finished in Guler after 1890. It appears that this demise can be attributed to changing times and people's changing tastes. Even though the jagirdari system has lakhs of problems, it cannot be denied that unique and extraordinarily beautiful art kept evolving during those times. Due to the end of the jagirdari system, the patronage enjoyed by the artists from the kings kept declining and Kangra art also began vanishing slowly.

Who were the people who painted such beautiful paintings? According to Raja Baldev Singh, these people belonged to the Tarkhan and Suniar castes and one can find their descendants in Haripur till date.

These contemporary artists do not retain any ancestral knowledge or experience of art, and they earn their livelihoods by painting doors and windows.

Just like a man passes through childhood, youth, middle age, and old age, Kangra art also passed through four distinct phases. The first phase was the phase of experience when the artists were trying to adopt a new style of art. In Guler, this period lasted from 1661 to 1695 (from the reign of Vikram Singh to that of Dalip Singh). When Govardhan Chand and Prakash Chand were ruling from 1740 to 1790, Kangra art reached its zenith in Guler. The initial paintings of Govardhan Chand's reign have an extraordinary simplicity and beauty! Many paintings of Lord Krishna and his Gopis were painted during the last days of Govardhan Chand's reign. This phase can be called the spring (*basant*) of Kangra art. Guler art had further improved by Prakash Chand's reign. From 1790 to 1878, the influence of Sikh art on Guler paintings is central. This phase refers to the reign of Bhup Singh to Jai Singh. Now, the talent of art began to shift towards embellishment and nuance, but the creation of art kept declining day by day. Even in the evolution of man, excessive decoration and embellishments signify declining art. This phase refers to the autumn of Kangra art, and the decline of this art can be clearly seen.

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Just like what happens in human beings' life, after reaching a special zenith, art and literature begin showing the signs of old age. Why art powerfully develops at one time, and why it declines at another time; this question is a conundrum of history. No one has a satisfactory response for it.

Chapter 43**Kangra**

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*Dughi dughi nadiyaan te saili saili dhara  
Chhaile chhaile gabru te bankiyaan naaran  
Bolan bol pyaara  
Ni mera Kangra des nyaara*

‘Deep rivers and flowing streams,  
Handsome young men and beautiful  
women,  
Sing the beloved words  
Oh, my Kangra, my cherished land!’

We reached the railway station of Kangra Mandir through the metre-gauge rail. We reached Kangra after walking for about half an hour. This city used to be the capital of the Katoch kings in olden times. In the beginning of the 11<sup>th</sup> century, the Trigarta or Katoch kings of Jalandhar ruled over the area between the Ravi and Satluj rivers. Today, this area comprises Gurdaspur, Hoshiarpur, Jalandhar fort, and the lower side of the Beas valley. According to a story from the Padma Purana, the area of Doaba-Jalandhar used to be a sea. The word ‘Jalandhar’ also means area under water. It is possible that this story refers to the Miocene Ocean which was spread till Punjab at one point of time. The lower valley of the Beas was called Trigarta because three tributaries of the Beas — the Banganga, Kurali and Neugal rivers join it at Haripur-Guler and enter it in front of Siba Fort.

Susharma was an old Katoch king who fought for the Kauravas in the battle of Mahabharata. After a tense battle which resulted in his defeat, he was forced to leave his territory in Multan and so he moved to the Kangra valley.

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He built Kangra fort.

Kangra fort has been built at a very scenic site. The Banganga flows on one side of the hill while the Manjhi river flows on the other side. A narrow way leading to the fort has been secured by many doors. These doors have been given the names of the warriors who took over this fort — one of them is called Jahangir Darwaza, another one is called Ranjit Singh Darwaza, and still another is called Angrezi Darwaza. This fort is in ruins today. According to a painting made by an English artist in 1840, this was a magnificent building. During the 1905 earthquake, the turrets and outer walls of the fort collapsed.

We reached the inner area comprising the kings’ palaces in the earlier times, after passing through many doors. Now these inner palaces also stand in ruins. There are Lakshmi-Narayan and Ambika Devi stone temples in this area. This place also has a Jain temple with a statue of Adinath. Today, old banyan trees rule over these ruins.

The snowy peaks of the Dhauladhar stand towards the north, while there is a white temple of Jainti Devi on a high hill towards the south. This fort was left neglected for a long time. Young lovers from Kangra used to come here for long walks. This was then taken over

by the Archaeological Survey of India. So, now the doors are closed in the evening and young lovers cannot use it for their rendezvous anymore. A lot of history is associated with the fort of Kangra. This fort was conquered by Mahmud of Ghazni in 1009 — that was his fourth attack. Mahmud of Ghazni bombarded this fort with canons from his location on the hills of Jainti Devi. It must have been difficult to carry the heavy canons up such steep hills. It is said that Ghazni's loot comprised seven lakh gold dinars, 700 maunds of gold and silver utensils, 200 quintals of pure gold, 20 quintals of crude silver, and 20 quintals of gems comprising real pearls, diamonds, emeralds etc. In those days, this area was called Bhim Nagar after the Pandava brother, Bhima. In 1337, Muhammad Tughlaq captured this fort. This is how Badr-i-Chach describes this fort:

“This fort has been built between two rivers, just like an eye is safely ensconced between two eyelids.

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It has always maintained its honour, and neither Alexander nor Dara could capture it. This fort is the home of many brave men and beautiful women.”

In 1662, Jehangir reached the Kangra valley after passing through Siba and Guler. It is said that the Emperor was so enamoured of this place that he decided to get a summer palace built for himself here. The foundations of this palace were dug out in a village near Kangra named Gagri, but then, he preferred Kashmir over Kangra and so the plan was abandoned. Nowadays, a power station has been built at the site of the palace.

A historian named Masir-ul Umra belonging to the times of Shah Jahan, writes, “The Kangra fort is built on top of a hill; this fort is very strong. It has twenty-three turrets and seventy doors. The interior stretches to more than a kilometre. There are two ponds in the fort.”

This fort was controlled by the Mughals until 1783. Saifullah Khan, a Mughal Governor, was ruling over this area when Jai Singh Ghanaiya captured this fort from him. Sansar Chand asked Mahar Singh and Jassa Singh Ramgarhia for help, but then he struck a deal with Jai Singh. Jai Singh gave this fort to Sansar Chand and instead took the Pathankot area from him in exchange. This is how Sansar Chand became the raja of Kangra. The art collection held by Mian Ram Singh has one painting which shows this fort being attacked.

However, the biggest loss incurred by this town was when a powerful earthquake wrecked it at 6 a.m., on 5<sup>th</sup> April 1905. The town was reduced to rubble. An old inhabitant of Kangra shared his eyewitness account of the earthquake with us. He said that the day began with a beautiful and peaceful morning. Loud bangs were soon heard, and the buildings began falling. Many lives were lost because the people were sleeping when the earthquake suddenly occurred. It was a time of chaos — rocks burst, and walls and roofs fell. A loud bang could be heard after every two or three hours, it felt like the town was being bombarded with canons.

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Not a single house was left undamaged. The golden domes of the temple were reduced to rubble. Except a small temple, all other religious buildings collapsed. Many livestock were lost to the quake because they were usually kept indoors for the night.

Earthquakes happen because of cracks in the earth or the movement of hills. Shimla, Kullu and Dhauladhar are on old hills of the Himalayas but Mandi, Dharamsala and Kangra are located on new hills. The earth beneath the new hills is still weak. It will not be out of the ordinary for more earthquakes to happen in this susceptible area until the earth gains stability here. Another reason for its vulnerability to earthquakes is that it has large boulders, sand and soil which descend from the Dhauladhar and thus put a lot of pressure onto this region. Because of increase in the weight of the load, the land underneath is slowly becoming crushed and therefore turning unstable.

Other than the fort, the temple of Vajreshwari Devi has made the old city of Nagarkot famous. The people refer to Vajreshwari Devi as 'Mata' (mother). This area is also known for its basmati rice. The rice grown here has a special aroma. The jaggery produced here is also delicious. This place is also known for nose reconstruction and eye treatment. Plastic surgery is not a western invention, the history of Kangra explains how surgeries to reconstruct noses have been performed here for centuries. It is said that nose surgeries began in this area during Akbar's reign. In those days, the noses and hands of thieves and dacoits would be chopped off as punishment. Even today, some angry husbands slash through their wives' noses so that they stop looking beautiful. The British traveller Vigne met a surgeon called Budhia in Kangra, and this is how he explained the nose surgery,<sup>223</sup>

"The patient is given a lot of opium, bhang or alcohol so that he becomes unconscious. Then, a hole is pierced through the skin of his forehead, and his skin is pulled down. After the operation, the skin is sewed back, and the wound is bandaged. The surgeons would inform their ignorant patients that this surgery was performed as per the blessings of the Devi, and so it could not be performed outside Kot-Kangra. I saw many people with nose surgeries happily heading home even though their new noses were ugly as compared to what they naturally had. The residents of Kangra had expertise in this profession. They were proud of themselves even though they had no power to smell in these new, artificially made noses."<sup>224</sup>

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Folk songs also mention this practice, "We will add drumstick leaves to the boiled rice and eat them/ We will get our noses cut off if we sneeze/ New noses can be made in Kangra."

The families of nose surgeons are called 'Kangera'. Nowadays, these people do not follow their forefathers' profession any longer.

The devotees of Shakti pay their obeisance to Vajreshwari Devi. Pilgrims from all over the country used to visit this temple with numerous gifts for the Devi. So, a lot of valuable offerings accumulated at the temple. Thus, Mahmud of Ghazni looted this temple to take away this wealth in 1009. After Mahmud left, Hindu kings got this temple re-built in 1043. In 1337, Muhammad Tughlaq looted this temple and demolished it. Raja Sansar Chand got it re-built, again, in 1440. One of the generals of Sher Shah Suri named Khumas Khan again destroyed it in 1540. It was then rebuilt during Akbar's reign. It is said that Akbar offered a gold umbrella

<sup>223</sup> Godfrey Vigne was an English traveller who visited Northern India (Ladakh, Kashmir, Baltistan, northern Punjab), Afghanistan and Persia. He wrote several books detailing his travels in the 1840s.

<sup>224</sup> The text does not mention where the quotation marks end.

(*chhatri*) to the Devi. The Sikh Governor of Kangra, Sardar Desa Singh Majithia built this temple as per the style of Sikh architecture, and Rani Chand Kaur offered a gold *kalash* to be placed on the big dome of the temple. Maharaja Ranjit Singh visited this temple twice. The first time he visited it, he donated a gold statue of himself only wearing his undergarments and worshipping the Goddess. This statue can still be found inside the temple. This temple collapsed during the earthquake of 1905 and it was rebuilt most recently in 1920.

One has to cross a serpentine bazaar to reach the temple. Articles like sacred thread, beaded necklaces, perfumes of varied types, incense, copper utensils and idols of the Devi are sold in these shops. The Gaddi women sell woollen blankets at the crossing. These blankets are often bought by tourists. There are paintings of Goddess Durga on the walls of the entryway of the temple, which have been painted by Gulabu Ram. There is a courtyard outside the temple which has a platform made of carved stones. There is a marble stone on this platform where people take oaths.

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It is said that some people used to cut off their tongues and offer them to the Devi. Abul Fazl writes about this strange tradition:

“There is a town named Nagarkota on a hill, it has a fort named Kangra. There is another high hill on the outskirts of this town which has a site called Mahamai. This is visited by pilgrims from near and far to fulfil their wishes. The strange thing is that the Devi’s followers cut off their tongues to get their wishes fulfilled, but their tongues grow back to their original lengths in one or two days, and at times grows back in a few hours only.” This tradition still goes on. The husbands fed up with their wives’ garrulousness encourage their wives to offer their tongues to the Devi. I was in Kangra when a Jat farmer from Rohtak cut off his tongue and offered it to the Devi. He bled a lot and almost became mute. The tongue is the only organ in the human body which regenerates with increased length after being cut. So, the pilgrims’ tongues would grow to longer lengths than before and they would consider that the Devi’s blessing.

After the fort and the temple, I viewed the picturesque scene of green farms from Mission Hospital. Then, I went to see samples of Kangra art. Man Chandra Uppal is a prominent lawyer of this area. He had gathered all [the local] Kangra paintings at one place so that I could see them comfortably. The mahant of Vajreshwari Devi temple brought two paintings — they had ugly frames and layers of dust were accumulated on them. One painting portrayed Abhisarika Nayika, and another depicted the folk tale of Govardhan Dhara. Both these paintings seemed to belong to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. An old widow had five to six paintings of Hindu gods. These paintings were of poor quality. The owner sent us a message saying that none of these paintings was worth less than 500 Rupees. Only Man Chandra Uppal had good quality paintings in Kangra. He had ten paintings of Tantrik Devi, and one of the Durga prayer in handwritten style with pictures illustrating it. This prayer with handwritten text is said to have been owned by Sansar Chand. Man Chandra Uppal received these as his legal fees from Kharjinder Chand, who was the third son of Raja Rajinder Chand of Nadaun.

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This handwritten Durga Path which Mr. Uppal received as his fees is a beautiful piece of art, proving that Mr. Uppal is a wise man who is passionate about good art. Every chapter of this text is on different pieces of paper and papier-mâché has been used to make its cover. There is a painting of Durga on the uppermost board. Durga is shown riding a lion. Every chapter of this book has been written on different coloured papers like blue, yellow, green, and red papers. The corners of every page have been dyed blue. At the beginning of every chapter, there is a beautiful painting of Durga. The work is very neat, and it shows the artist's skill and self-confidence. There is no doubt that these paintings have been painted by some renowned royal artist. The book is covered with an embroidered Kangra *rumaal* (kerchief). On the kerchief, Durga is sitting on a throne and four servants stand around her. There are banana plants and peacocks embroidered on the borders of the *rumaal*. Despite the passing of time, the silken red, yellow, and green threads look as good as new.

Puran Chand, an old artist from Kangra, told us that the Radha-Krishna painting published by William Archer in his collection was made by his uncle Nand Lal, who died at the age of eighty-five years around ten years ago. He told us that he has a rough sketch of that painting. He also told us that there were many paintings of the Kangra of earlier times which had been destroyed by the earthquake of 1905. We have no way to prove both of these statements so we cannot say if they are factually correct or not.

After conducting research about the town of Kangra, I arrived at the conclusion that Kangra art is not only related to the town of Kangra. There are historical reasons for this conclusion. Kangra art was born in Guler during the reign of Dalip Singh (1661-1695) and this art reached its zenith during the reigns of Govardhan Chand and Prakash Chand (1730-1760). After that, Raja Sansar Chand gave his patronage to this art at Sujampur Tira. This raja ruled for a brief period, and so the artists emerging during his time could have shifted to Kangra. The name of this district is Kangra and that is also the name of the valley, although the district courts are in Dharamshala and Kangra is only a tehsil.

After realising that all of the artists of the Kangra style did not belong to Kangra, and instead came from surrounding areas like Guler, Sujampur, Alampur and Nadaun, I decided to meet the contemporary artists of this style.

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The Tehsildar of Kangra called for Gulabu Ram and Lachhman Das from Simloti. Both of them are the most well-known contemporary artists of this style. Simloti is a beautiful village situated about five miles away from Kangra. Lachhman Das is a simple Pahari man. He brought a number of paintings painted by his family, wrapped in cloth. He calls himself 'Guleria Machata', and explains that three generations back, his family shifted from Guler to Simloti. His great-great grandfather was named Basiya. He was a prominent artist of his time and he had painted many paintings of Raja Sansar Chand. These paintings are human-sized and realistic. Basiya's son Padmu painted a portrait of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. This painting shows Ranjit Singh with his *sardars* (generals/chiefs). The faces of the individuals in this painting are close to reality, but it ignores the proportions of the legs and the body. Padmu's other paintings are not so well-made. Mr. French met Hazoori during his travels, Hazoori was Lachhman Das's

father. Lachhman Das showed us many paintings made by his father. In one of those paintings, Krishna is shown playing Holi with his gopis. This painting is not as beautiful as those painted by earlier artists. It appears that Hazoori was a fast painter, and he was often asked to paint family portraits. One of the paintings shows a postman from Tira Sujampur. He is shown wearing a black headscarf and a red coat, a bag of letters is hanging from his neck, and he is shown delivering a letter to a woman. Another painting portrays Siyaah Nafis from Kangra tehsil. Siyaah Nafis sits on a charpoy with his father. His wife, son and daughter stand in front of him. Since the postman and the employee of the tehsil office did not pay the fees, these paintings were left with Lachhman Das. Hazoori painted a very pretty picture of a family from Lahaul. The people of Lahaul stand with snowy peaks in the backdrop. A woman is shown giving a cup of tea to a man. There is a prayer wheel in his hands. Another man is having tea, a boy is smoking a hookah and there are household articles in front of all of them. I found this painting interesting.

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In another painting, Ram Chandra, Lakshman and Sita are shown returning home from exile. This painting has been made by Gulabu Ram's grandfather, Chandu. Today, this painting is owned by Lala Diwan Chand from Simloti. Sri Ram Chandra, Lakshman and Sita are shown sitting in the *pushpak vimaan* (mythical aircraft) in the midst of clouds, and the residents of Ayodhya are shown excitedly waiting for them at the outskirts of their town. The unique harmony with which the sky is painted in this piece cannot be found in any other Kangra painting.

Gulabu Ram is a proficient artist. He has decorated the new Vajreshwari Devi temple built in Kangra with paintings of Durga and the demons. He has also painted Ras-Mandal paintings with Krishna and the gopis dancing in a circle. He has decorated the temples of Bandla and Paprola; the rich people of Kangra commission him to beautify their homes with his paintings. Gulabu Ram's work is very ordinary, the neat lines evident in the works of famous Kangra artists are absent in his paintings.

We met another artist of the old style called Lachhman Das Raina from Rajol. His great-great grandfather Nikka shifted from Guler to Rajol during the reign of Raja Shamsheer Singh. Lachhman Das belongs to the family of the famous artist Nainsukh. Other than old mythological stories, Lachhman Das has also painted some paintings depicting the lifestyles of contemporary times. One of the paintings shows a British man on a hunt. The focus of the hunter on the hunt is portrayed very sharply. The hunter has placed his gun between two branches of a tree and is aiming at a black buck. One of his servants is shown standing behind him filling gunpowder, while another is carrying an unsheathed sword on his shoulder. Another painting shows a Pathan moneylender; it beautifully depicts the terribly dangerous people of Kabul. The Pathan moneylenders are shown as two hungry vultures leaving for a hunt. Another painting shows Bengali snake-charmers dancing and singing. One Bengali passionately plays the *been*. A snake is wrapped around one of his arms. Another man is playing the khartal, a man wearing wooden slippers stands beside him, clapping. A fourth companion dressed in



white clothes beats a drum. In another painting, one can see a man and a woman being defrauded by a *chhaleda*.<sup>225</sup>

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This man and woman, who look like husband and wife, are walking on a road one evening. Some way ahead, they see a snake, but the snake turns into a fox further away. A little further, this fox turns into a barking dog. Some distance further, they are even more amazed by this barking dog turning into a witch with large teeth. The man remains cool-headed and tries to calm the panicking woman.

But such ordinary paintings cannot be considered to belong to the school of Kangra art even though they hold some place in art history.

All the artists from Kangra we met complained about their lack of patronage, their sad faces and hungry gazes confirmed that what they were saying was not wrong. Despite this claim, they have a lot of self-confidence. They believe that if they were given opportunities similar to their ancestors, they could also produce great quality work. Whatever they may claim about their own skill, one cannot deny that the work of contemporary artists is nothing as compared to the older artists. I believe that the work of these current artists is the last link in the chain of Kangra art. Their artwork marks the collapse of a magnificent art style, which seems to have happened because of loss of patronage.

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<sup>225</sup> The *chhaleda* is an evil spirit which can change its shape and form. Such spirits are doomed to roam the earth until their day of salvation. This legend is common in local beliefs in the Himachal region.

Chapter 44  
**Jwalamukhi**

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*Paan supari mayiaa dhuja le narela*  
*Pehladi bhent chadhaya maiyaa*

*Paan*, betel nut, and coconut to the Mother,  
are the first gifts we present to the Mother.

We left the dak-bungalow of Kangra at the crack of dawn. The sun rose after we crossed the Banganga river. After crossing the Banganga, a unique view of the fort of Kangra can be seen. The road is very narrow, and it meanders around the hill like a snake. One can also see the railway track from here, and we saw some travellers were walking from the railway station to Jwalamukhi. Finally, we reached Rani Tal. There is a police station here, and a dak-bungalow has been built right at the hilltop. An extraordinarily beautiful view of the Dhauladhar can be seen from there.

Near the dak-bungalow, there is a shrine of Baba Fattoo on a hillock. Baba Fattoo was a follower of Sodhi Gulab Singh. Sodhi Gulab Singh had blessed Baba Fattoo with the guru-ship. It is said that Baba Fattoo's miraculous powers revived Sansar Chand's brother Fateh Chand from death. Pahari people respect Baba Fattoo till date and take oaths in his name. A Baisakhi fair is organised at the site of his shrine, many people from near and far come to the fair to seek the fulfilment of their wishes and desires. Many people present their wishes in writing and pledge that they will perform certain rituals upon achieving their desires. The priest of the shrine performs prayers on the tomb. When somebody's wish is fulfilled, people return to make offerings to the Baba. There is a similar dargah in a village named Lanz in Kangra tehsil.

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This shrine is associated with Baba Bhoopat's name. People take similar wishes to that shrine as well. Many people who cannot pay the fees of legal cases in courts, come to seek help from Baba Bhoopat. Many victims of injustice and orphaned people come to this shrine and complain about their aggressors. When their enemies catch diseases or some other trouble befalls them, they believe that this is a result of Baba Bhoopat's curse. Because of this fear, the 'enemies' either agree to compromise or pay money for the losses incurred by the victim.

After spending the night in the bungalow of the lake of Raat Rani, we began our journey to Jwalamukhi the next morning. The road from Rani Tal to Jwalamukhi remains dusty and sandy because of the constant footfall of travellers. We saw uncountable travellers journeying on foot or via tonga, moving towards the temple of the Goddess of fire. Pahari children stood at the road-side begging for money from the travellers. They often cling desperately to the travellers, saying, "Please give us money, Lala, please give us money, Lala". They follow travellers with these cries on their lips until they give them something, just so they stop following them.

Eventually, we could see the sacred village of Jwalamukhi. This village is constructed like the nest of a hawk on one side of the hill. The golden kalash of the temple of the Goddess of fire, in particular, could be seen over the square white houses of the village. Before going to Nadaun, we had decided that we would pay our respects to the Goddess first. 800 years ago, the site of this temple was discovered by a Brahmin. It is said that a Brahmin living in southern India saw a vision of the Goddess, and she commanded him to go to the hills of Kangra; there he would see flames engulfing the forests. As per the command, the Brahmin came here and found this sacred site. He set up a temple here; there are many stairs one needs to climb to reach the temple. There are shops on both sides of the stairs, where coconuts, sweets, incense sticks and small silver umbrellas are sold. These objects are bought by the travellers and then the priests sell these to the shopkeepers again. This way, these objects keep circulating from the shops to the temple and from the temple to the shops. When a traveller reaches Jwalamukhi, many pandits surround him. These people share the names of their ancestors who visited this temple. These pandits also make arrangements for the travellers' accommodation and journeys.

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The priests of Jwalamukhi are called 'Bhojki', because their primary role is to offer food to the Goddess, which essentially means that they fill their own stomachs. The travellers whose wishes get fulfilled offer small silver umbrellas to the Goddess in gratitude.

The marketplace was full of travellers; we saw many men and women from different sites in Punjab and Uttar Pradesh who claimed that they reached this temple with great difficulty. We removed our footwear at the outer door and entered the temple barefoot. Travellers offer money to the Goddess. Many devotees place halwa in the mouth of the stone idol. The marble floor had become very slippery, and I felt quite disgusted by the drippings on it.

The largest temple had a golden kalash, they were gleaming in the rays of the setting sun. Gas escapes from the vents in the temple, the priests strike fire by lighting it with a match — the blue flames emerging with red bursts due to this process amaze the travellers. There are many small temples a little ahead, one can see sadhus in saffron clothes, their hair in dreadlocks, in these temples. There are six springs near Jwalamukhi where iodine in the form of salt and potassium iodide can be found.

It is said that Jwalamukhi is the mouth of a demon named Jalandhar. The legend says that the demon Jalandhar was crushed under a mountain by Lord Shiva. Jwalamukhi is the mouth of that demon. The upper face of Doaba is his back, and that is called Jalandhar nowadays. This area has a lot of famous temples. The Shiva temple in Baijnath, and the Nandi-Kesar temple in Jurangal which lies across the beautiful bungalow of Dhaad, are some examples. This demon's feet are spread till Multan. The legend of Jalandhar also narrates the emergence of the Kangra valley and mountains from the Miocene sea, in the following way. One arm of this sea used to stretch till the Shivalik hills of Hoshiarpur. The defeat of the son of the sea, Jalandhar by Lord Shiva, can be read as a symbol of the turning away of the sea and the emergence of mountains out of it.

Many famous celebrities have visited this temple. One of them was Emperor Akbar. Even today, the priests point towards a small river that emerges from a spring, and they say that Emperor Akbar had got this water-channel constructed to douse the Goddess's fires.

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But he was not successful at getting it constructed and the Goddess's flames kept striking. Seeing this, the emperor became a devotee of the Goddess and he offered a weapon of gold to her temple to pay his respects. It is said that when Emperor Akbar arrogantly looked upon his expensive offerings to the Goddess, the weapon of gold transformed into copper. In this way, multiple stories are associated with every temple, and devout people claim to prove their religion supreme through such legends.

Maharaja Ranjit Singh came to this temple in 1809. Upon being asked by Sansar Chand, Maharaja Ranjit Singh defeated the Gorkhas and pushed them beyond the Satluj. Sansar Chand met Ranjit Singh in Jwalamukhi and the agreement between them was stamped by them in this sacred spot. Maharaja Ranjit Singh captured the Kangra fort and gave Sansar Chand a jagir composed of surrounding villages. When Ranjit Singh returned after defeating the Afghans, he got the shikhara of the temple covered with gold foil in gratitude, and gave uncountable wealth in charity to the poor. It is said that Maharaja Ranjit Singh was so awe-inspired by the flames of Jwalamukhi, that he seemed like a moth attracted to a flame. Ranjit Singh's son Kharak Singh gifted the Goddess with silver doors. These doors have brilliant engraving work. The priests of this temple showcase these doors with great pride.

In this journey, my wife Iqbal Kaur was also accompanying us, and she was responsible for the food supplies of the whole group. Iqbal, Archer, Mulk Raj, his wife Shireen, and secretary Dolly, went to the temple without me. What they saw will be shared through Iqbal, and you can listen:

"We had planned to go to Nadaun from Rani Tal through Jwala ji. After the tea and snacks of the morning, we always packed lunch for our journeys. We would stop for a meal whenever it would be time for lunch, and the site we were at also looked beautiful. Everyone would heat the food together, eat it and talk about the journey all the while. Then, after resting for some time, we would gather our things and set off for the next stretch of our journey."

"I was especially happy about going to Jwala ji because I had seen this temple when I was a child. The hazy memory of that visit remained in my mind.

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Whenever we went in that direction, this memory would make me want to visit this temple again. What I remember for certain is that this path would only be traversed on mules and horses. One could only see a narrow, snake-like meandering stony path. People would finish this journey before the sun set because wild animals would often leave forest areas, come to the road and also attack passers-by sometimes."

"I still remember that the priests of those areas showed us the flames in different places, saying that the Goddess appeared there. Seeing this, the devotees would offer *khoya* and half-

half litre (*ser*) laddoos as prasad, keep it in front of the Goddess of flames and pay obeisance to her. This is why I was so keen to visit the Jwala temple.”

“When we reached Jwala ji, the temples looked the same, but the market which one needed to cross to reach the temple, had a wider road than before. On the way, all of us bought things from the market. Our friend Archer greatly liked the colourful glass bangles in the stalls, and he bought four or five sets of bangles for his daughter. The others bought mango-wood spoons, vessels for yoghurt, and large wooden plates for kneading dough which the people from that area had crafted very well. We also bought a lot of incense and caraway seeds (*ajwain*) tied up in bitter colocynth fruit and walked towards the temple. The priests there sat waiting for people who would give large offerings to the temple, so that they could pander to them.”

“They were not concerned about the cleanliness of the temple, and no feeling of devotion was evident on their faces. A group of men and women from a nearby village, who had reached the temple for the fulfilment of some wish, were sitting in front of an idol, and singing the praises of Lord Krishna. The men were playing drums and bells, the women were performing dances and those who were shy about dancing were being asked by these women, “You should also dance, one should not be shy about dancing in front of God.” We kept watching them for some time. After this, we saw that in a place where the ground had sunk, there were flames erupting out of the depression.

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The priests of that site would take everyone along and inform everyone that the Goddess had appeared at those exact spots.”

“Similar flames could be seen emerging at small distances from one another. Those who did not know the scientific reason behind these flames would be amazed by the miracles of God and nature, but nobody would think about purifying the mind; after offering laddoo, *patasha*, and *karah* halwa to the Goddess, the people made the place so muddy by washing their feet, that it had become difficult to stand there. Our friend Archer was worried that we might catch the germs of some disease from the dirty floor. He kept a handkerchief in front of his nose and climbed down the stairs after seeing everything in a hurry. We also followed him downstairs.”<sup>226</sup>

We also had a collector of folk songs along with us on our journey to Jwalamukhi, with uncut beard and long hair, and fond of photography. His photography was so good that he would infuse life into photographs. When I returned from the temple, I saw that a large crowd had gathered around our jeep. I came to know that our friend was trying to coax a Pahari woman into lowering the cloth wrapped around her face, which is when her husband came upon the scene. Rumours flew that a Pakistani fakir was clicking photographs of Hindu women. Then, what else could happen but that someone held his arm, another took hold of his coat and he was soundly beaten.

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<sup>226</sup> This is where M.S. Randhawa’s wife Iqbal Kaur stops writing, and the narrative is picked up by Randhawa again.

In India, and more specifically in Punjab, clicking photographs of women one is not familiar with, is exceedingly difficult. At the very least, the women say, “If you want to click a photograph, photograph your mother, your sister, why do you want to photograph us?” We saved our friend’s life with great difficulty. If a constable had not come upon the scene then I do not know what the illiterate Kangra people would have done to him. They were told that that man was the Tagore of Punjab and that he had collected folk songs, richly contributing to Punjabi literature. He was clicking photographs from a social and cultural perspective; he had no ill will. Those simple Pahari folk did not know that Kangra was also visited by these famous, highly placed people. They were only familiar with the forcefulness of Punjabis who would brainwash their beautiful daughters and take them to the plains.

If they are by themselves, then a lot of women do not refuse to get their photographs clicked, but if their men are nearby, then clicking their photos is dangerous.

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This time, we were going from Shimla to Narkanda, and when we reached near Phagu, an exceptionally beautiful Pahari woman with gold neck ornaments, a deep yellow kerchief tied to her head and *laung* (nose-pin) in her nose passed by. Her *laung* was gleaming in the rays of the setting sun, she gracefully walked across the road. My friend Shauri, who was lost in the ecstasy of photography, would have never found this opportunity elsewhere. He instantly pulled out his camera and began clicking pictures. In two minutes, the husband of that woman came by twirling his umbrella and asked, “Babu ji, what are you doing?” Babu ji was terrified, he turned the lens of the camera towards a tree and said, “I am clicking pictures of the forest.

## Chapter 45

*'Aayega Nadaun, Jayega Kaun'*<sup>227</sup>

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The journey from Jwalamukhi to Nadaun is very pleasant. Mango trees have been planted on both sides of the road. One can see the Beas river after about five miles, and the town of Nadaun on a high hill right in front. The saying popular about this town is that “One comes to Nadaun, who leaves?”. This saying was popularised by the fact that Nadaun was a very merry town, and during the times of Sansar Chand, three hundred prostitutes maintained their business here.

We thought of freshening ourselves up after the dusty journey before entering Nadaun. My friend, who is passionate about preserving folk songs, had dust accumulated in his beard — he looked like a hermit. We crossed the river in a boat with a flag. Some inhabitants of Nadaun had gathered at the opposite bank to welcome us. There was a short man among them. This gentleman had dyed his long moustache black, was wearing a silk achkan and a blue turban, and was carrying a silver-tipped stick. After conversing with him, we came to know that he was the Raja of Nadaun, Rajinder Singh. He led us to the stairs near the bank. A marriage procession was waiting at the riverbank. The palanquin was covered with red cloth, and the members of the procession were dressed in colourful clothes. They made a beautiful picture.

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We reached Amantar after passing through the bazaar. We rested for the night in a guest room of the Raja. We could see the Beas river from the guest room.

Nadaun used to be the residence of the kings of Kangra. Sujampur Tira and Alampur were established much later. Many stories about the earlier kings circulate here.

Many jackals lived near Nadaun; they would cackle at night. It was night-time in the month of Poh, when the raja was sleeping in his palace in Amantar. The jackals began howling loudly. The next morning, the raja asked his minister, “Minister, why do jackals cry at night?” The minister replied, “Majesty, it is the month of Poh. Ice drips onto them. These poor souls cry because of the extreme cold.”

The raja ordered his officers to distribute blankets among the jackals. That very night, the servants laid blankets in the forest near which the jackals lived. They took the remaining blankets to their houses. That night, the jackals cried again. The following morning, the raja again asked his minister, “Minister, the jackals continue to cry, are they still feeling cold?” The minister replied, “Majesty, they are thanking you because you protected them from the cold.”

The literal meaning of Amantar is ‘the bank beneath the mango tree’. This name seems to have originated from a large, heavy mango tree at the riverbank. The hill people used to cross the river from this location on mashks. Amantar has those palaces of Sansar Chand from whose windows he could gaze at the flowing Beas. These palaces have now fallen into ruin. A stone path leading to the palaces is the only remnant, but that is also eroding away. It is said

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<sup>227</sup> “One comes to Nadaun, who leaves?”

that Sansar Chand used to live in this palace during his old age with his lover, the dancer Jamalo. The ruins of Jamalo's palace can be seen even today.

There was a lot of festivity in Nadaun during Sansar Chand's reign. Blacksmiths, carpenters, goldsmiths, carpet-weavers, singers, and writers lived in Nadaun, along with around two hundred prostitutes. If one were entangled in their web of love, it would be impossible to escape from it.

Sansar Chand was at the zenith of his power during 1760-1805. However, the battle with Gorkhas thoroughly defeated his armies. If Ranjit Singh had not supported him, he would have been reduced to an even worse state.

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Sansar Chand was at the mercy of Ranjit Singh after the Gorkhas left. If that were not the case, he would have held his pride, because it is said that he did not consider himself subordinate to Ranjit Singh. To flatter him, his courtiers would say, "May you win Lahore." Broken by depression and despair, he retired to Amantar with Jamalo. His courtiers were asked to not interrupt his leisure. There was a *kamala* tree in front of the door of the palace, and as per the command of Sansar Chand his soldiers and courtiers would salute this tree and leave. "*Kaamle ki jai diya*" is still a popular idiom in Kangra.<sup>228</sup>

The oldest four-storeyed house here was built by the youngest son of the Raja, Jodhbir Chand, inside the walls of the palace. The vast ground where the raja's army used to practice their parade has now shrunk in size. The students of the local high school play football there. This town has fire temples and a gurdwara. There is a Shiva temple on the left of the bank, its wall paintings are a beautiful example of Kangra art. When I visited Nadaun again in 1960, I saw that some stupid devotee had white-washed over these paintings. When I asked about this, I was told that this person did not like the nude bodies of gopis depicted in the Cheer-Haran scene.<sup>229</sup> I asked for buckets of water and got these walls washed, with great difficulty, at least one of those paintings could be clearly viewed again. Our country is full of such prudes. If they had more authority, many beautiful works of literature, the *Raas-Leela* of the *Bhagwad Purana*, *Geeta-Govinda* and *Rasika-Priya* of Kavi Kaushik would meet the same fate as the paintings on the walls of the temple in Nadaun.

There is a deep well near the temple of Lord Krishna; water is drawn from it even today. There is a Guru Gobind Singh gurdwara a little ahead. It was built by Sardar Visakha Singh on the completion of the Pathankot-Kangra railway.

Since Nadaun is no longer the second capital of the Kangra valley, it has now lost its importance. However, it continues to be a beautiful town, and it will remain significant till the Beas river flows at its feet.

<sup>228</sup> Saluting the *Kaamal* tree as a substitute for the Raja inside the palace.

<sup>229</sup> From the Mahabharata, Draupadi's *Cheer-Haran*, or Scene of Humiliation refers to the assembly of the Kauravas removing her clothing as her husbands, defeated in the game of dice, look on. She prays to Lord Krishna to safeguard her honour, and the cloth covering her body becomes never-ending, as per Krishna's blessing. Here, *cheer-haran*, simply means forcibly removing clothes covering the body.



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I missed the river, the cows grazing on its banks, and its diversity of people, when I returned to the plains — I just could not forget this scene. When the first rains fall on the plains, I recall that mangoes would have ripened in the orchards of Nadaun, the river would be in full flow, and dark clouds would be gathering on top of the hill of Jwalamukhi. Near Nadaun, the beauty of the Beas increases manifold when dark clouds gather over it. The lightning streaking through the dark clouds over the Jwalamukhi hills is so captivating! The river appears as molten gold, reflected in the gleam of this lightning, and the hills of Jwalamukhi look even darker. One cannot doubt the saying, “One comes to Nadaun, who leaves?” You do not feel like leaving Nadaun once you go there. The sweet memories of Nadaun are unforgettable.

After my wife Iqbal saw the temples of Nadaun, the palace and paintings, she, Dr. Anand, and his wife and secretary decided to travel to Gopipur from Nadaun via boat. Mr. Archer and I were not fond of boat-rides, so we accepted their decision and instead travelled by car to Gopipur while they reached it by boat. We spent the night resting in the raja’s guest house. The slowly moving Beas looks like a heavenly lake in the moonlit night. The full moon of Puranmashi seemed to be sprinkling silver on the valley of the Beas. The moon amazed us all. The leaves of the tree on the banks of the river shone like golden earthen lamps. This was a peepal tree and its copper-coloured leaves looked like several lights reflecting the moonlight. A Hindu poet has rightly said that Brahma lives in the roots of this tree, Vishnu lives in its trunk and gods sit on all its leaves. I slept in the veranda, appreciating the truths spoken by the poet.

I had barely gone to sleep when the sky flashed with lightning; the thunder made the hills shiver, as if God were getting furious. The tributaries of the Beas were moving swiftly towards it, as if a besotted woman is looking for her lover, distraught. I was sitting in the veranda of the guest house of the raja of Nadaun, and worried about whether the following day would have clear skies or not.

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But I woke up early in the morning to see that the clouds had scattered away and the Dhauladhar had become visible. Soon, the burning sun of the morning emerged from behind the peepal tree of the night and its leaves turned golden from their copper tone in the sunlight. I asked my friends to savour the scenes of the hills, but they were busy chatting. Mulk Raj responded that he preferred the pictures of the mind more than pictures of external surroundings. I asked him that if that was so, why had he come to such a far-off place? He could visit the scenes of his mind even in Bombay.

Archer and I travelled via car to reach Dehra Gopipur; the rest of our companions arrived via boat. We saw the Gugga temple after crossing the river. The clay idol of Gugga is well-crafted, the figure of his horse with its tail lifted looks like it is galloping fast.

Then, we crossed a valley with small, barren hills on either side. There is a shortage of water here. One can then see an empty fort, a symbol of Rajput honour. The road towards Haripur Guler forks out from here. This road is unmetalled, and we reached Dehra Gopipur in a cloud of dust.

The boat journey undertaken by our companions, and some other incidents of Nadaun have been written by my wife in the following pages of this book, they have been printed verbatim.

Chapter 46  
**The Journey of the Beas**

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*Nadiyaan te naale ethe vagde*  
*Ethe vagdi Beas vo*  
*Ethe vagdi Beas vo adhiya*  
*Sab di bujhandi pyaas vo*

Rivers and streams flow here,  
The Beas passes by,  
The Beas flows here, oh lover,  
It slakes everyone's thirst.

After being introduced to Mr. Randhawa, Dr. Anand and Mr. Archer, the Raja of Nadaun was introduced to Dr. Anand's wife and his secretary, Dolly.<sup>230</sup> While introducing his companions, Dr. Anand said, "This is my wife Shireen. She is a famous dancer in India and has also set up a dance school in Bombay to teach children." Listening to this, Raja sahib's face glowed. He said, "Very good! It is great that we will be able to witness your talent in action." Then he met Dolly, a happy-go-lucky person with a talent for photography. The raja was pleased to see her radiating enthusiasm from head to toe.

Raja sahib's residence is built on the banks of the river. It has three to four rooms on one side which the raja had got tidied when he received news of our arrival. His manager (*munshi*) opened these rooms for us. The rooms opening towards the river were very well-lit while the ones on the other side were so dark that we had to switch on the tube-light even during daytime to use those rooms.

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There was a long veranda in front of these rooms where we spread mats, chairs, and cots, making it reasonably comfortable to sit in and enjoy the beauty of the flowing river. After that, we unpacked our luggage in our rooms. Raja sahib's son also reached the residence in the meantime. Kanwar sahib was a seven-year-old boy; he was fair complexioned and had kohllined eyes. He wore a zari embroidered achkan and elaborate orange royal headdress, which suited him very well.

Mealtime descended upon us. Raja sahib had very hospitably got multiple non-vegetarian dishes prepared for us. The food came to us garnished in large plates but when Archer saw that it was laden with ghee, he decided to eat only pulao and fruits. Everyone else greatly appreciated the food. It had been prepared by the raja's family chef who was familiar with all the old family and royal recipes. We then rested for a while and set off to see the palaces of the raja's ancestors in the evening. They were built on huge boulders; the water of the river flowed beneath. A natural tunnel led the way from inside the palaces to the river, which the queens used, to go for bathing. The water of the river flowed through that tunnel. Even though there are no remains of the ancient building, we could see that the raja's ancestors had used the naturally occurring boulders and landforms in a unique way for their leisure and

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<sup>230</sup> As mentioned in the previous chapter, this chapter has been written by Mr. Randhawa's wife Iqbal Kaur.

relaxation. When we went to see the tunnel, we could only see sand deposits, which explains that the river water must have flown through it back in those times. It must have been a beautiful place. We sat on those big rocks for some time and revelled in the loveliness of that place, enhanced by the river flowing some distance away.

We kept musing about kings' lifestyles in older times. Then we went to Raja sahib's palace which was decorated in the English style with sofas and mirrors on the walls. There were Kangra paintings on some walls — some of them were creations of earlier artists, while others had been painted in the new style. After viewing the paintings, we returned to our palace and had tea.

After tea, Mr. Randhawa sat in the veranda gazing at the natural beauty surrounding him, lost in his thoughts about the book he was going to write.

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The rest of us decided to go down to the river. Dr. Anand and Archer decided to swim in the river. As they swam in the river, we sat on its banks and looked at colourful stones; some of them had unique colours. While travelling, we had decided to complete the next stretch of our journey via boat, so we hired a boatman for the journey the next morning at 9 a.m.

It was dark when we returned. The moon emerged at 9 p.m. from behind the hills and through the trees, after we had finished dinner. In no time, the river and surrounding area began gleaming in moonlight. One could savour that scene forever; that is when we decided to spend our summer vacations in that quiet and beautiful place.

The next morning, we got ready and decided to greet the Rani and thank Raja sahib for his hospitality. It was possible that she could not have come to meet us due to purdah. So, I, Dolly and Shireen went to the palace. We met the young prince playing outside. We asked him about the whereabouts of the rani. He pointed up and said, "There." We asked him to come with us and take us to his mother.

We stood in the room he had taken us to. It had a stove on one side and the rani's maidservants on the other side. One maidservant was heating something up on the stove. The other one was looking for something in her sewing kit. We asked them to inform the rani that the wives of their guests had come to meet her. They did not verbally respond to us but turned their heads to signal 'no' and began smiling at each other.

In the meantime, an old servant came out and informed us that the rani would not meet us and that we should go downstairs. We thought that he probably did not know that we were guests of the raja, and that is why he was refusing the meeting. I repeated my words, "Go! Please go to the rani and inform her that we are standing outside to meet her." At the same time, we heard the rani's running footsteps, the door shut with a loud bang. A soft voice came from behind the door saying that she was bathing and so could not meet us then.

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We were surprised to hear this. We quietly descended the staircase. We did not wait for the prince's answer because he was in the room with the rani, the door shut. We shared this story with our companions after returning, they laughed a lot. Then, we gathered our luggage for the

next stretch of the journey. About 15-20 minutes later, we saw the raja and the prince coming towards us. All of us thanked him for his hospitality and took our leave.

We packed our lunch and hurriedly set off for Dehra Gopipur. We kept our luggage in the car and asked the driver to meet us on the other side of the bridge. Half of us wanted to travel by boat, while the other half decided to journey by car. We would decide how to proceed on our journey once all of us met at the bridge. The bridge was two or three miles away from there. Mr. Archer was anxious about travelling by boat because it was a hot day. So, Mr. Randhawa also decided to accompany him in the car. We handed them half of the food and went towards the boat.

We were happy when we reached a village on the way where a large fair was taking place. All the village girls gathered on the banks of the river; we were excited to see them. It was an extremely hot day, but we were enthused about walking in the village in the midst of the village folk. We saw many interesting sights on our journey — forests, rocks, swaying green farms, people working in those farms, fishermen spreading their fishnets in the river. In some places, the boat passed through swirling water currents; the fast current scared us because the boat could have toppled over. Our boatman would inform us about the water currents on the way in advance, so that we would sit calmly through them, mentally and physically prepared. This way, the boat would be uniformly balanced, and the boatman would powerfully steer the boat through the currents. It felt like we were sitting on a swing moving to and fro. None of us had travelled such a long distance by boat on a river, before. By 12:30 p.m., we reached the banks of the river near a village where a fair was going on.

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We got out of the boat and walked for about half a mile in the sun, crossed huge sandy boulders and reached the village fair on the other side. Some of us opened umbrellas to protect ourselves from the harsh sun, the others walked without umbrellas. We met groups of village girls on the way — they were wearing colourful salwar-kameez, knitted *chonk-phul* on their heads and nose-pins in their noses. They were singing Pahari songs. They stared at us just as we stared at them; they stared because Dolly and Shireen were wearing trousers. One of the boys said that we were people from the film industry; this comment made us laugh. When we had set off from village Bodlan to Jalandhar during our journey, Dolly and Shireen had accompanied us. When the Jatts of the village saw them wearing trousers, they said, “Waheguru, Waheguru” in shock.

We talked to the fair goers to clear any doubts they had about us being film-people. We shared our knowledge about Pahari customs with them to reassure them. For instance, we would ask the girls, “Are you going to drown Ralli?” and they would respond in the affirmative, surprised. Every girl held a doll and called her Ralli. They would marry the doll off in her wedding clothes and jewellery and then drown her. They would hug their dolls and weep loudly before drowning them.

We kept watching this for some time. Then we had lunch under the shade of a tree. We rested for some time and then began walking towards the boat at around 2:30 p.m. It was still very hot. We held our tiffin-boxes and walked fast for the next leg of the journey so that we could quickly reach the boat and get some respite from the scorching heat. Despite walking fast, it took us 30-45 minutes to reach the boat. Our interaction with the simple hill-folk had

enthused our companions, because they were used to meeting shrewd people in Bombay. The simplicity of these people touched their hearts.

After moving a little further in our boat, we saw a temple on the right side. We could see red, yellow, and blue dupattas on it from our position. When we asked the boatman about it, he told us that this place had another fair and that when the girls come back after drowning Ralli, they go to this temple first and then return home. However, because of the scorching heat and the tiring journey, none of us ventured forth to visit the festivities in the temple.

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Despite that, our eyes kept returning to those colourful cloths. We kept looking at it until the temple could no longer be seen. We reached Gopipur at 4:00 p.m. in the evening. There is a dak-bungalow nearby. When we reached our destination, we saw both the sahibs sitting in the veranda, having tea, talking about why we had not reached yet and hoping for our well-being. We reached the dak-bungalow, rid them of their worries about us, and refreshed ourselves after the long journey with hot tea.

Chapter 47  
**Dehra Gopipur**

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Dehra Gopipur is the tehsil of this area. It has a scattered unorganised market. It has large buildings, a tehsil office, a police station, and schools. There is a dak-bungalow on the slope of the river. When we reached the bungalow, we saw that an executive engineer of the Punjab government had occupied the bungalow. When he did not show any intention to vacate the bungalow, I showed him a letter signed by the Chief Engineer to coax him into budging. He did not take the hint. That is when we saw what an officer's arrogance could be like, acting like Fannee Khan.<sup>231</sup> We were amazed to see this kind of misplaced pride. In the meantime, a Naib-Tehsildar who was known to me, reached there. I asked him to talk to the engineer to pay his respects to distinguished guests, specifically to the famous writer from England Mr. W.G. Archer and the famous Indian novelist Mulk Raj Anand who were accompanying me. He should have been welcoming them warmly. After so much effort, the engineer vacated the bungalow with great difficulty. The selfish behaviour of the officer shows that if that was how he behaved with us, he must have been behaving even more poorly with the general public.

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These officers just live good lives with their decked-up wives. They are least interested in their surroundings and completely unconcerned about the people around them. This class of officers is the reason for the hatred between the public and the government.

After placing our luggage inside and ensuring that my companions were resting in their rooms, I came outside. I saw a dusty road. A station-wagon had arrived with a highly placed officer of the Punjab government in it. He was known to me. He was very tall as compared to the girth of his body. He had such a dry nature that my hunger would vanish upon seeing him. The joy of my spirit flew away upon seeing him. He told me that he could only stay for tea for half an hour. He was living in the bungalow of Bharwain situated across the river, for the night. Both of us sat on the chairs in the veranda. He asked me, "What is the purpose of your visit?"

"I have taken leave to come here and conduct research on Kangra paintings. As of now, we have come from Nadaun, where we saw the collection of paintings held by the Raja of Nadaun and Mian Devi Chand", I told him.

"What are these Kangra paintings for which you are making so much effort? If I were in your place, I would have spent my vacation in a city like Bombay which has big hotels, theatres, and cinema halls. What will you find at a desolate place like this?"

I went inside and brought my book of Kangra art which had coloured photographs of the paintings I had selected. It had prints of forty Kangra paintings, and it had been greatly appreciated by art lovers. I handed over that book to the officer. He hurriedly flipped through it like one shuffles a deck of cards in a card game. He returned it to me after five minutes. This

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<sup>231</sup> Fannee Khan here, is a derogatory term for someone deluded enough to believe that they are very powerful.

book was a result of five years of research and effort, and it had such beautiful prints of baramasa and nayika-bhed — I had thoroughly enjoyed discovering them. Some of them were so awe-inspiring that thinking about them even gave me sleepless nights. I would often dream about these paintings, elated — the artists who had painted these works had expressed the true feelings of their hearts. Tolstoy has said that art is a map of the writer's or artist's emotions, the viewer feels the same emotions.

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We truly feel for the woman's besotted heart and expectant love in those paintings. Kangra art is truly an exceptional style of art. But I do not know why those paintings did not have any effect on my friend. The process of showing him the paintings was futile.<sup>232</sup> In reality, only an empathetic person can savour art. A great painting is a *raga* while our spirit is a sarangi. When beauty unites with the spirit, music happens. This is the test of art.

This reminds me of a Chinese folk tale. There was a large tree in the valley of Lungman, the tree looked like the emperor of the forest. Its crown talked to the stars, while its roots stretched to the underworld. A sorcerer cut this tree, made a harp out of it, and gifted it to the Emperor of China. The sorcerer said that only the best musician could play the harp. Many great musicians and singers tried to play it, but they could only produce rough tunes. When all of them failed, Peevu, the greatest musician of all time, tried to play it. He picked up the harp with love and respect and caressed it the way a rider loves his wild horse. He sang songs of the seasons, high mountains and flowing water, and the tree remembered those older times. The harp let out such a melodious tune that the world began changing colour. The western wind began blowing through the branches of the tree again. Waterfalls began burbling at the flowers and flower-buds. The soft pattering of the rain, the chitter of insects and the melody of the koel, the dance of the rain. Listen! The lion's roar began echoing in the mountains. The moon peeped through leaf-less trees in autumn. Winter heard the flapping of birds' wings, hailstones rained down on branches with a thunderous noise.

Peevu changed the melody again, he sang a love song, making the tree sway with joy. A shining cloud passed through the sky like a maiden sways with the pride of her beauty. The cloud created a long, dark shadow over the hill. Peevu changed the melody again.

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He began singing songs of war, the world became drowned in sounds of running horses, of swords and spears clattering. Struck by lightning, the mountain of ice began moving. The emperor asked Peevu about the secret of his success. Peevu replied, "Your majesty, the other musicians failed because they were playing their own melodies. In my ecstasy, I allowed the harp to choose its own melody. I cannot say if Peevu was the harp or the harp was Peevu."

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<sup>232</sup> *Bhains ke aage been bajana*: a popular idiom which means that playing the *been* before a snake charms it but using the same tactics to charm a buffalo would be futile. The same is the case with impressing his friend with the paintings.



Peevu refers to the highest form of art and we are the harp of Lungman. When the magic of beauty touches the hidden strings of our heart, our soul starts playing music like a sarangi, and we reach the tenth gateway of existence. Joyful, minds talk to minds and hearts to hearts. Old, forgotten memories are refreshed and desires and exaltations emerge. Our mind becomes the paper on which the artist paints his colours, it is imbued in ecstasy. This is what a great painting feels like, like a part of oneself.

We should gaze at a great painting just like we look at a great person. There should be love and humility in our heart at that moment. Especially Kangra art comprises paintings which are like shy, beautiful girls giving one joy when viewed with wisdom, gentleness, and love. We value a great painting more and more with each passing day, just like we feel for a good woman, we do not get tired of looking at her. Similarly, one does not get tired of looking at Kangra paintings over and over again because every time you see it again, you notice some previously hidden nuance.

I did not concern myself with the ignorance of the officer with respect to Kangra art. I went to the riverbank and sat on the grass. It was evening time; a breeze was blowing.

I savoured the beautiful setting of the young, burning sun while sitting on the grass. In no time, darkness engulfed the hills and silence descended. The pitch dark was soon mellowed by a sliver of the moon smiling from behind the highest peak. The sky was full of stars, the moon looked like Lord Krishna in a sea of gopis.

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I could hear the sound of the *vanjhali*, its melody melted into my heart. Its melody is so beautiful in the quietude of the hills. There is certainly some magic in it. Otherwise, why would the gopis lose themselves in Krishna's love if there were no magic in the music? This is the voice of God, when God's men listen to this, they experience the power of God, omnipresent, flowing through water, earth, forests, hills, and plants. The sound of the *vanjhali* lifted the mood. Even now, when I think of Dehra Gopipur, the waves of the river sparkling in the moonlight come before my eyes and my ears hear the magical music of the *vanjhali*. Enjoying this melodious music of the *vanjhali*, I consumed my dinner at the bungalow and lay down on the charpoy. Listening to the music, I drifted off to sleep.

Chapter 48  
**Dada Sibba**

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‘Dade di bediye ni soukni tu merie  
Tere par jhuli reha mian jasrotiya’<sup>233</sup>

*Tan-tan-tan*, the sounds of bells hit my ears, and I woke up. It was still dawn when the farmers were leading their oxen towards the fields. The early morning star was twinkling above the peak of the mountain, it had a muted glow on the landforms below it, which seemed like its family of lights was encircling the peak. I woke up and went to the riverbank. Cold wind blew in from the snowy peaks, making me shiver. A swoop of demoiselle cranes was flying towards the grounds, their sounds were very melodious. Sarus cranes could be heard from the fields, they sounded like an organ playing. Their voice is so sacred. This is the sound of true lovers who live together their entire lives and never separate from each other. It was the season of spring, of *pungara* flowers. The air was fragrant with *garna* flowers. The sun emerged slowly; its rays spread a golden shower over the canopies of peepal trees. Pearls of dew on the grass melted in the rays of the sun. The Beas quietly collected near white rocks and moved towards the plains while the *tatiri* bird and rabbits played around.

After savouring the beauty of the morning, I woke up my companions. Iqbal quickly gathered our luggage, and served tea and boiled eggs to everyone. Raseel Singh loaded all our luggage into the car and after getting ready, we walked towards the river with our next destination in mind.

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When we descended to level ground, we sat in the car.

When we were crossing over the river via the rope-bridge, we met two ministers. One had a red tilak with white rice grains stuck to it, on his forehead. The ‘signboard’ of the other’s forehead was even more beautifully decorated. Due to the fall of the ministry, they had become even more devout pilgrims of Jwalamukhi, which did not help their cause in the end. These two men also had special reverence for astrologers, and they did not do anything without asking astrologers. What was these innocents’ mistake in this case? Any human being who is confused about a problem seeks support and consolation by asking for advice from astrologers. The clever astrologer is one whose advice flatters the person’s heart.

Now, our car was hitting round pebbles on the road which had been scattered over the edges of the rivers and streams. The 12-mile-long road from Dada Siba was surrounded by dense mango and *harad* plants. Apart from these, *baheda* and *arjuna* trees welcomed travellers with their cool shadows. Finally, we reached a mountain valley named Dada Khad. This ravine is extremely broad. Its edges are full of round pebbles. We rested for a while under a mango

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<sup>233</sup> The woman tells the boat in the Dada rivulet, ‘you are my *saunkand*, my husband sways in you with ecstasy.’ *Saunkand*: the woman who is the second wife of one’s husband/lover .

tree, we could comfortably see the beautiful scene of the old palaces of Dada Siba from there. The garden of twelve gateways, which was used as the residence of kings at one point, was built in the womb of the mountain over Dada village. It looked very picturesque. After crossing the ravine, we passed through a very beautiful forest, it had clumps of *amaltas*, baheda and bamboo trees. The hills look very pretty when covered with tender bamboo. The garden of twelve gateways, the former kings' residence, has now fallen into ruin. Nowadays, it has no roof and the paintings on its walls, which must have been beautiful in older times, have now more or less faded away. After seeing the ruins of the garden, we met an old relative of the raja named Rani Abrol. Many old Kangra paintings have been placed on the walls of her veranda, but now they have faded in colour. This proves that

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the colours of Kangra paintings can remain vibrant as long as they are shut up in boxes.

I asked the Rani if someone had seen her paintings before me. The Rani told me that two years ago a Sikh officer had come and had liked all the paintings with unshorn beards and well-tied turbans which conformed to the Khalsa appearance. Since he was the administrator of the area and large landholders always try to flatter the governors of their areas, it is possible that the rani gifted him those paintings of her own accord.

India is famous for its sycophancy and this flattery and sycophancy comes from Mughal rule. A famous idiom belonging to the Mughal times is that "When the Badshah calls the day night, then it is their duty to say, "Badshah you are great, the stars are twinkling with great vigour." This makes me recall another incident from Rae Bareilly. I was the Deputy Commissioner of Rae Bareilly in 1940 and before me Dr. S.S. Nehru, who was very fond of experimenting with plants and electricity, was the Deputy Commissioner of this zilla. When someone would meet him and complain about stomach-ache, he would offer him a bottle of electrified water. Many of his employees in the zilla court were his patients, and they would always report that the electricity-touched water had greatly benefitted them. One time, Dr. Nehru was experimenting on maize with electricity-touched water. The plants had increased in height by six inches and he had to go somewhere for fourteen days. Before leaving, he asked the Tehsildar, Babar Mirza, to take care of the maize plants and water them with electrified water every day. On the tenth day, because of the carelessness of the gardener, a cow ate up the plant. When the Tehsildar saw this in the evening, he was very disturbed. This Tehsildar was a good manager, the very next morning, he got four feet tall maize plants from surrounding farms and planted them in place of the plant that the cow had eaten. When Dr. Nehru returned, he saw that the maize had grown very tall. He asked the Tehsildar about the growth spurt. He responded, "The electrified water helped some, huzoor gave his blessings to the rest, and so the maize grew so well." This proves that the miracles of 'huzoor' can work wonders in this country. Even in independent India, huzoor's blessings work very well. When the Governor and Commissioner

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visit villages, then these villages are cleaned over and over by the local authorities, presenting a false picture of people's lives.

After taking leave from the rani, we met the young raja of Dada Siba; he lived in a house made in the modern style. The territory of Siba used to be part of the larger territory of Guler. In 1460, the younger brother of the raja of Guler, Sabran Chand, established his own independent kingdom and set up his own capital. This is why this territory is called 'Siba' after his name. This territory lies on the left bank of the Beas. In 1622, Jahangir passed by this area while going to Kangra. In 1808, the raja of Guler, Bhup Singh, again added this territory to his kingdom and in 1809, Guler and other hill kingdoms came under the control of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. Siba was saved from destruction because Maharaja Ranjit Singh's Prime Minister Raja Dhyani Singh was married to two princesses from Siba. Raja Gobind Singh from this region died in 1845. Raja Ram Singh became the new raja, and he drove out the Sikhs from his territory during the second battle of the Sikhs. He died in 1865. After his time, some wall paintings created by the artists from a town named Haryana in the Hoshiarpur region, were kept in Raja Ram Singh temple. In this temple, Lord Krishna, Lord Shiva, and Goddess Durga are worshipped. The colours of these wall paintings remain vivid till date. Some of these paintings are also interesting. In one of the paintings, figures of women are joined to create the image of an elephant; Lord Krishna and Radha are shown riding this elephant. In another painting, Lord Krishna is shown killing the serpent Kalia. In yet another painting, Lord Rama is shown breaking the bow of Lord Shiva. There is also a wall painting of Raja Ram Singh. He died in 1874, but he is still remembered for this temple. The fort of Siba which is empty nowadays, is slowly falling into ruin.

We had finished viewing the wall-paintings of Dada Siba and were sitting in the veranda surrounding the building, when a Pahari woman decked up like a bride, a nose-pin in her nose, and her face covered with the veil of her red dupatta, walked into the temple. Behind her, her husband, a youth of about twenty years carried a black umbrella in his hand and walked towards the temple in a silk coat with a paisley pattern. Hari Krishan Gorkha, who had accompanied us on this journey, wanted to click a picture of the couple. Now look at how cleverly the Gorkha took their photograph. First, he made both of them stand next to each other, and clicked one photo.

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Both of them were happy that a photograph of them had been clicked for free.

Then he made the woman remove her veil and clicked her picture. Then he made her husband stand at a distance and took her picture. The husband kept thinking that he was being photographed with his wife. When he took three to four photographs from different angles, then the woman stopped being shy and got beautiful and lively photographs of herself clicked.

If someone has successfully photographed Pahari women, it is Hari Krishan Gorkha. He is a tall and handsome youth who has a laughing face, sharp facial features, and the tendency to spread happiness. Due to his welcoming nature, he becomes friends with people very comfortably. The innocence and beauty of Pahari women leaps out of Gorkha's photographs.

Many people do not consider photography an art, but when Gorkha holds the camera it feels like some famous artist has held his brush. He has so cleverly filled his paintings with human emotions, that they feel like live individuals expressing feelings in real time. This is why he is a real artist of photography.

The evening descended and we felt very hungry. We could not find anything to eat other than a cup of tea and hot jalebis from a sweet-maker's shop. I consider jalebi the queen of sweets. Full of syrup, it transports one to heaven upon touching the tongue.

In 1930, I used to place my chair in the grove of trees in the village to study. One day, a Raol Muslim from the neighbouring village of Berchha was grazing his buffaloes near the pasture. When he saw me, he approached me and said, "Sardar ji, you have completed sixteen classes already, and yet you keep studying more."

I answered, "Fajju, it is very difficult to find a job nowadays."

He said, "Oh Sardara, see the family of talkative men, they have two Patwaris and one Kanungo, cannot you become a Kanungo? If nothing else, become an Inspector of Banka like the Muchhla's son."

I said, "Okay, I will think about it."

He continued, "Sardara, the truth of the matter is that your uncle should give a basket full of money to some big officer. Nowadays, nobody asks about others without a bribe."

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I tried to change the topic and said, "Fajju, only you can act this brave, my uncle is very miserly."

"Sardara, we are poor people, this is the game of rich people. Only the rich can eat jalebis."

During the Baisakhi fair, sweet makers (*halwai*) from Dasuya would set up their sweet stalls in front of our gurdwara Garna Sahib; the farmers would salivate over the large plates of laddoo and jalebi they would showcase. They would not even know the names of any sweets other than these two. Fajju had also seen plates of jalebi at this fair, and according to him, eating jalebis was the best experience of tasting food one could ever gain in life. In this, I am in complete agreement with Fajju, even though he could not give good advice for jobs.

Chapter 49  
 “Loki Kangre Di Pyaari”<sup>234</sup>

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*Duniya Nurpure di pyaari*  
*Loki Kangre di pyaari*  
*Tere bachiyan ju saari bacha bacha*  
*mannda*

The world of Nurpur is beautiful,  
 The people of Kangra are lovelier,  
 Every child knows this.

The pace of life in the Kangra valley mirrors that of the blooming paddy fields in October, and the swaying bamboo in farmers’ courtyards; it moves like the numerous snow-fed rivers which flow slowly and gently. The people here live in close connection with nature, and they are in harmony with their surroundings. There is no doubt that the character of the citizens of any country is dependent upon the surroundings. These surroundings can be natural, social, or religious. Most of the residents of the Kangra valley are Hindu, and pure symbols of the Hindu civilisation can be found here. Other than the natural life and occupations of the people here, their lives are further improved by their unique traditions. The peaks of hills either have temples or kings’ palaces. One can see the most aesthetically pleasing sight of the Kangra valley from this location. The flags of these temples dance in the clean wind of the Himalayas, they transport the prayers of the residents of Kangra up into the sky. The short hills and fertile valleys which are rejuvenated by snow-fed rivers in the shadow of the Dhauladhar have been raising people famed for their honesty, decency, bravery, and valiant nature.

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The people here are very beautiful, but their simple lives make them even more attractive. Upon socializing with them, one can gauge that they are simple and happy folk. Two more qualities which can be associated with them are that they are loyal and considerate. They are unfamiliar with the styles and sophistication of urban areas, so their frank, open style of communication can be hurtful at times, but they do not have the intention of hurting anyone. They are simple and innocent like our rural people. They feel happy if someone favours them, and they get upset if something unjust happens or they are scolded. Where a sweet word can buy their trust, a rough word or a bitter look can drive them miles away. If an employer is short-tempered, his reputation falls in people’s eyes even though he may be very efficient in his work. The residents of Kangra are very shy and humble, and only one sign is needed to keep them at a distance.

When the lands left behind by the Muslims were being redistributed amongst the refugee farmers and landowners from Pakistan, I observed that the residents of Kangra could not fight for their rights over the land with as much determination and assertion as was done by the Sikh Jatts from the plains. They would leave for their homes, disappointed, if a rude officer would shout at them. There were many stupid officers among these officials. One of them was called ‘Ravan’ by these people. In my opinion, only two people from Kangra can be

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<sup>234</sup> *The People of Kangra are lovelier.*

called its representatives. One of them was Parmeshi Das, who would lobby for himself and his people very smartly. Another was a farmer from Nurpur named Wadhawa. I have to share my insights into his nature.

I was listening to the complaints of refugees regarding land allotment at the secretariat of Jalandhar in the evening. I saw an old man entering through the bamboo curtain (*chik*). He had a small, trimmed beard and a wrinkled face.

I asked, "What is the matter, Baba?"

He replied, "I have been allotted land 30 miles away from my village. My body is old, I will not even find four people there to pick up my bier when I die."

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I said, "Baba, this is a difficult job, but we will see if there is any land available near your village or not."

He said, "I do not know who planned this land allotment. How can people who are born in hospitals and live in hotels understand the brotherhood of our villages and castes? How can they understand how we participate in each other's sorrow and joy?"

I laughed and said, "Baba, one must not talk about the officers like this."

The Baba responded, "My Lord, do not mind me saying, you are from a village. You understand everything. And if your name is Randhawa, my name is Wadhawa, you must do my work."

I laughed my heart out at the old man's openness, immediately called the Patwari and got alternative land allotted to him.

People from Kangra are hesitant to talk about things unless they are encouraged to do so. They are generally suspicious of strangers. They do not open up before strangers and do not go to a new officer until they become familiar with his nature in detail. Once they open up to you, there will be no end to their loyalty. They are initially very hesitant, but ultimately very loving and affectionate. They are sweet-natured. However, they have a bad habit of constant litigation, they go to court even for small disputes. They are known for their honesty. They generally do not act as false witnesses and do not hide the truth. They are honest even when they deal with each other. They have very few written agreements, because oral agreements are so easily trusted.

These people are very honest and are sympathetic to their superior's needs. Although one comes across small thefts in hilly areas, this crime is limited to the working class. During the Sikh regime, the honesty of Pahari people was well-acknowledged by the Sikh Sardars; they would appoint Pahari people to responsible positions.

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They would remain alert and take care of the chief. They would never be lured by greed, and would only bring their own hard-earned money home.

Like other people who live in the hills, they are fascinated by the hills and rarely seek jobs in the plains. Very few of them can tolerate the hot weather of the plains.

They love going to fairs and enjoy playing musical instruments and singing. There are many fairs and wrestling competitions here during the months of Chet and Vaisakh. The

women of the hills dress up in colourful clothes, adding verve to the Kangra valley. In some fairs, the women sit at the peaks of hillocks while the men sit below, singing loudly. Today, the tradition of throwing coins and ber has stopped, but it used to be popular back in the day. Small children blow trumpets and eat sweetmeats while the women dress up to shop for bangles, combs, mirrors, and other sundry things. The fairs of Kangra are bright and cheerful. The masses of smiling people look like seas of joy. People in the Kangra valley are very superstitious. They believe in magic and sorcery. Even when a general incident takes place, someone dies or someone's buffalo stops giving milk, they believe that some enemy has cast a curse on them. They apply black dots on their children's forehead to save them from the evil eye. If they build a new house, they paint a red tongue on a black earthen pot, make an evil face on it and hang it in front of the house to keep it safe. Some village folk believe in witches and black magicians. Childless widows are considered a bad omen and if they meet you on the way during some auspicious ceremony, it is believed that the ceremony has become spoiled. They prefer taking advice from priests even for small tasks. They believe in astrologers even now.

If one wants to see Sanatan Hindu religion in Punjab, it can be found in Kangra. Hindu religious festivals are full of activity, and everyone reads *Vishnupadas* together at night. The women sing bhajans during Krishna Janamashtami.<sup>235</sup> *Jagrans* are in fashion all night where professional singers beat the drum all night and sing the stories of Gopi Chand and Puran Bhagat.

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There are many Durga temples on many peaks because they are staunch believers in the Devi. Jwalamukhi is also an avatar of Devi. Stories of how Goddess Durga killed the demon are narrated and people are inspired to be brave.

A mixture of old beliefs and new scientific thoughts has gripped the Indian imagination; the hills are not untouched by this. These people who lead a modern life, play the radio, and use electricity, have not gotten rid of older views. I remember that when we went to meet Raja Suket at his residence in Sundernagar, his son, the prince, accompanied us to show us the Devi's temple.

We saw that there was a washroom attached to the sanctum sanctorum in the temple which had a bathtub for washing built in the western style; the room also had wooden slippers, a towel and soap. The prince told us that the Devi washed herself in it, and they would always find a wet towel in the morning. We experienced something similar in Vrindavan. There is a garden there which is said to be used by Lord Krishna during his lila with the gopis. The priest told us that when the temple and garden are shut at night, a *datun* and laddoo are kept in front of the temple. Lord Krishna appears at night because the *datun* is always found used in the morning, and a few bites of the laddoo remain. If one remains in the garden at night and sees the God, they die soon after. We met a Sikh mendicant who told us that he stayed in the garden at night and kept reciting the prayer of Jap ji Sahib, but he did not see anything.

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<sup>235</sup> Festival celebrating the birth of Lord Krishna.



The Rajputs of Kangra think that they have royal lineage. They trace their ancestry to Thakurs and Ranas who used to rule over small territories a long time ago. They had two goals just like the people of medieval Europe, love, and war. But, the people of Kangra express their love in the relationship of the husband and wife and satisfy their desire to fight by getting a job in the army. In earlier times, these people used to get recruited in the raja's army, but now they join the Indian army. Those who are familiar with Kangra, can immediately identify the houses of Rajputs.

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Their houses are generally built in a different style on top of hills after taking safety measures on all sides. They also tend to live in sites in the forest which have natural shelter. If there is no natural curtain outside their houses, they grow trees to develop such a green curtain. There is a pathway about fifty feet from their houses, and strangers cannot go beyond it to go near their house. Only upper caste and upper-class men can enter these spaces easily. Mr. Barnes has mentioned a strange story about this idea of separation and the making of this curtain. Once, in the Mandi area, a house of a Katoch family caught fire. There was not any forest near the house where the women folk could run to and hide in to save themselves, so they instead got burnt alive in the house to prevent being seen by any man not belonging to their family (purdah). These Rajput girls also go to meet their parents in a palanquin which they cannot be seen from. Those who are poor travel at night, or take hidden pathways passing through forests or ravines simply to avoid being seen.

Rajputs are divided into two classes. The higher class of Rajputs is called Mian. They trace their ancestry to twenty-two kings. Their ancestors used to rule over some part of northern India at some point in time. The lower class of Rajputs is called the Thakurs. Their daughters are married to Mian Rajputs while their sons are married to Rathi women. A Mian is careful about safeguarding his home and honour — he never ploughs a field, he never marries his daughter into a lower caste, he does not get married into a family with low status. He does not accept money to marry off his daughter and the women of his household always remain in strict purdah. Perhaps his strongest driving force is that he would not plough a field, would not do this kind of labour. If he would plough a field, his status would fall, and he would be considered a lower-class Rajput. No Mian will offer his daughter to him in marriage and he would instead have to find a girl from the lower castes to marry. He will be humiliated in all experiences of life. During family gatherings and marriage functions, Rajputs of a higher status would not want to sit and eat with such a person. He would be disdainfully called 'hal-wah' or plough-puller, and he would decide not to go to such social events to avoid humiliation.

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This attitude against farming is as old as the Hindu religion itself. Some say that it is a crime to injure mother nature's chest with a plough. Some say that making a cow's calves help plough the field is a crime. Mr. Barnes, who came to India at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century writes, "It is very sad that the Rajputs are still clinging to these old rituals. One can see their barren faces and simple clothes to understand that these people have been left behind in order to

maintain their so-called simplicity and cleanliness. These people who work hard on the wasteland of the hills earn their bare living, but if some Rajput uses a plough, he is removed from his caste group. So, these people will do lakhs of any other jobs but will not farm. Some will sit on hills and spread their traps to catch hawks. They often do not catch hawks for many days and fill their stomachs by eating ber or consuming hunted prey, and if they catch hawks, they send them downhill, where they are trained and sold. Rajputs often remain free, they hunt with the help of hawks. They go for hunts and carry guns if they can afford them. One Rajput shakes the shrubs, another keeps his eye on any bird that flies out of it to send their hawk after it. This is how they spend time hunting prey. Those who own guns hunt wild boars and earn their living by selling their prey.” But, whatever Mr. Barnes has written about Rajputs is not true anymore, and Rajputs have also started showing interest in farming and other activities like other people.

Rajputs are large-hearted people and are good hosts. They generally have many servants and so have no work to do themselves. Many poor relatives keep living with them for years, and they live by fleecing the head of the family. A lot of money is spent on wedding ceremonies. Feasts are organised for relatives and friends and fireworks are burst to the enjoyment of all. Mujra were organised in earlier times. This tradition is rarely seen nowadays. There are two reasons for this, one is the religious persuasions of these people and second is their poverty. Rajputs are non-vegetarian and their women are also non-vegetarian.

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They sit in queues for wedding festivities and they are arranged in those queues as per their status. Sometimes, fights erupt over the issue of status and wedding functions end very unpleasantly.

Rajputs are very good-looking, they are often fair-complexioned. They have delicate facial features as though their features were moulded carefully. They do not do menial jobs and very few of them farm. Those who have started farming due to their poverty are also not well-off.

Since Rajput women stay in purdah, they cannot help their husbands for external activities outside the household space, in any way. Many of them do not even fetch water from the baoli. The household chores of a Rajput woman are similar to other women’s chores. She grinds grain, cooks food, spins the wheel, gathers fuelwood, but because she stays behind her veil, she cannot help her husband in farming activities, and she also cannot seek a job outside the home like a Rathi Ghirtani woman can. From the perspective of agriculture, Rajput women are useless burdens on the earth. One management officer had rightly said, “The beehive of Rajputs is a strange organisation. It has few workers, and more people who want to rest.” The Brahmin and Rajput women in the plains are rendered nervous by even the mention of non-vegetarian food, but in the hills, everyone except widows has a non-vegetarian diet. All Kangra women participate in the ceremonies of joy and sorrow and go to fairs except for those women of high-status families who use purdah. Their attire is simple and beautiful. They wear nose-rings which are called *baalu*. Only married women wear nose-rings.

Rajputs often work in the army or in civil service departments and send remittances home. The new rules of agriculture have disturbed Rajputs, because now the farmer ploughing

the fields also owns the land. This has made them turn away from older traditions and undertake farming work.

There are one lakh Brahmins and they form 1/7<sup>th</sup> of the total population. All Brahmins call themselves Saraswat Brahmins and they further have many castes and sub-castes. The first difference among Brahmins is that one class ploughs the field while the second class does not.

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Brahmins who plough the fields are considered low-class. The Brahmins of the hills do not mix with the Brahmins of the plains and they also do not eat food cooked by them. The Brahmins of the hills and their women eat non-vegetarian food, while the Brahmins of the plains do not.

During Aurangzeb's reign when Hindus were tortured and poor Hindus were converted into Muslims, then many Hindus began living in the hills to safeguard their religion. During those days, the Gaddi people came to the hills from Lahore, and the Kashmiri Brahmins came to Kangra during the reign of Aurangzeb and settled in villages surrounding Kot Kangra.

Rathis and Ghirats are farmers of the Kangra valley. They carry the burden of the agriculture of the entire valley on their shoulders. Rathis are mostly settled in the hills of Palampur and Hamirpur. Among the farmers, the status of Rathis and Ghirats is similar to the status of the Kanait caste in the west. The Ghirats are settled in the plains and in the fertile lands of the hills, while the Rathis are settled on the slopes which produce lesser crop and need more hard work to coax the soil. Just like a Rathi cannot be found in the plains of the hills, a Ghirat cannot be found on the slopes. Both the castes look and behave differently because they are settled in, and work in different places.

Rathis are mostly healthy and good-looking. They are fair-complexioned and well-muscled. The hard work they have to do to survive is the secret of their good health. The opposite is true for the Ghirats, they are dark-complexioned, short-statured, and weak bodied. They often suffer from goitre, which tells us that the land is fertile, and it produces divine blessings, but that does not guarantee the health of its residents. Rathis are considered the best among the Paharis. They are simple and calm-natured and keep working in their fields. They also use weapons if the need arises. Rathis are righteous, hard-working, and loyal.

Ghirat men are mostly short-statured and suffer from goitre. Even the women suffer from goitre. Their facial features resemble those of the people of the Jataar tribe.

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One can rarely find beautiful women among the Ghirats, though some people might call their young women pretty. They are hard-working farmers.

There are many castes among the Ghirats, like the Ghirats of Mukerian in tehsil Dasuya and district Hoshiarpur are called 'Chaang'. The Ghirats of Una tehsil are called 'Bahti'. They claim to have come from southern India. The deity who they worship during wedding ceremonies looks towards the southern direction with joined hands. They are worshippers of the cobra, and they have established their place of worship in every street. On the fifth day of Saavan, a special ceremony worshipping the Snake God (*naag-devta*) is held.

Mostly, the Ghirats are found in the valley of Palam, Kangra and Rehlu. They are also settled in the valleys of Haldoon and Haripur. They tend to live on plain, fertile land. The Ghirat women work in the fields without purdah and their men also work as labourers to earn money. Ghirats are extremely hard-working, their lands produce two crops a year and they remain busy in farming activities at one time or another. They sow paddy during the rainy season. One has to work in about 1-foot deep mud to sow paddy. Women participate more in this work. These women tie up their lehengas and stand in knee-deep water to sow the paddy. Paddy cultivation requires a lot of hard work. Ghirat women also help to take care of the produce once it is ready. This work barely ends when winter sowing season begins, beginning the same cycle, albeit one considered easier than the former. Ghirat women send wood, vegetables, mangoes, milk etc. to the market apart from working in the fields. This is how we get to know that the life of Ghirat women is not easy. These people are very hard-working and the responsibility of the agriculture of Kangra lies on their shoulders.

Chapter 50  
**The Gaddi People**

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*Chambe diyan dhaaran paun fuhaaran  
Udnoon ta bhij gaya saara  
Laddo da chit lagda Chambe diyaan  
dhaaran*

Chamba's streams, wind and rain,  
The dupatta is drenched,  
Laddo's soul is bound with Chamba's  
streams.

The Gaddi people are residents of the Dhauladhar mountains. These people are typically shepherds, they also undertake agriculture in some areas. Their villages flourish in Kangra and Chamba on both sides of the Dhauladhar. Their region of settlement is called 'Gadheran'. Their houses are clean, and they look very beautiful from afar. Fuller's earth applied on their walls is their primary speciality. These people usually live between the heights of 4000 feet to 8000 feet. Their sheep also climb the heights of the mountains, and they also descend down the slope in times of need.

The southern range of the Dhauladhar, which opens into the valley of Kangra, stands exactly straight. There are forests of chir pine and bamboo trees in their foothills. The high peaks are usually bare and laden with snow. The high peaks are so sharp in reality that snow slips away. The northern range of the Dhauladhar which opens into the valley of Chamba is full of fields of flowers and grasses. The mountains gently slope down to the banks of the Ravi river. The Gaddi people of Chamba live here. Beautiful Gaddi women wearing silver jewellery and grazing their sheep can be seen amidst these bushes of red rhododendron on these slopes.

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Showers of rain continue for days during the months of July to September and mountain and sky appear to meet because of the rainbows. How can this beautiful land and these beautiful people not win one over?

The Gaddi farmers and shepherds remain content whether they are residents of Chamba or Kangra. These people usually have two houses, one on the northern slope and the other on the southern slope. They often keep shifting from one house to the other. This movement stops only when the upper reaches of the Dhauladhar become covered with snow. The Gaddis of one side are often married to the Gaddis on the other side. In one song, a Gaddi woman misses her natal home in Kangra while staying in her marital home in Chamba. In this song, this girl, separated from her beloved parents, pleads to the snow-covered reaches of the mountains to recede so that she can see her natal home.

These unique people who are different from other Paharis, are actually Punjabi people who were displaced from the plains and so went to the mountains; this information surprises most Punjabi people. The word 'Gaddi' means those who comprise all castes. These people are Brahmin, Kshatriya, Rajput and Harijan, in reality. But, most of them are Kshatriyas (*Khatri*). They also have the typical Khatri sub-castes of Punjab. The Dhauladhar gave refuge to all those people who had run away from the oppression of the rulers of those times. It is usually believed

that Gaddi people were displaced during Aurangzeb's time, they fled from Lahore when Aurangzeb was forcibly converting Hindus into Islam. These people decided that it was better to leave their homes and hide in the high mountains of the Dhauladhar, than getting forcibly converted. The Gaddi people have carefully preserved their civilisation and culture, and they have not been affected by the light of modernisation yet. They satisfy their needs of daily life by themselves. They have developed their own dress. They have preserved the old traditions of Punjab, which have now vanished from Punjab with the passing of time.

These people are usually simple and kind. They can never be doubted for their honesty.

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They are so innocent, that when during the initial years of British rule, one of them would be fined by the royal officials of Kangra, they would pay the fine and then pay the same amount again in the treasury of Chamba. They gave two fines because they thought that they were residents of both the valleys.

The Pahari people often break forest laws, but these people have never been accused of any crime other than this. The Gaddi people are warm and joyful, they come together during fairs and festivals, drink lugdi and dance.

The clothes of the Gaddis are completely different from those of other Pahari people. These people wear a loose woollen cloak, they tie it to their waist with ropes of black wool. They wear a tall cap on their heads, which they pull to their ears during wintertime. They usually leave their legs bare. These people keep all kinds of things in their cloaks, sometimes even new-born lambs peek out from their cloaks with innocent eyes. These people keep their chapatti and vegetables like potatoes wrapped in animal-skin bags which are kept inside their cloaks. The cloaks of Gaddi women are different from the men. They wear it differently from the men. Their cloaks usually have red flowers embroidered on them.

The Gaddi people really like their old forms of dress, this is why they have not changed their dressing style till date. A Gaddi girl sings —“Ranis may like salwars, but Pahari women are imparted beauty by their own clothes.” Gaddi women are very fond of colourful kerchiefs, they display their kerchiefs with great pleasure and eagerness. They also prefer seeing their men in their cloaks and caps.

With respect to the passion embedded in song, the songs of Gaddis are the most beautiful amongst Pahari songs. The values of their lifestyles are greatly enhanced by the healthy air and water of this region, the milk-curd they produce, and their hard work. Their liberating lifestyles are expressed in their folk songs. Young boys and girls meet each other in the pastures, and it is not unusual for them to fall in love this way.

The agreements of the boy and girl are sought for marriages among Gaddis. If the girl is married to someone against her wishes, she often leaves the marriage and joins her lover. Such marriages are called '*jhand phook*'.

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No relative or pandit is needed for such marriages. They set fire to a bush, and the boy and girl walk around the fire eight times, following which they become husband and wife.

Except those of the Brahmin castes among them, widow remarriage is common among the Gaddis. The widowed woman is usually encouraged to marry her husband's older or younger brother, so that she can live an undefiled life. When a widowed woman is remarried, the couple is made to sit on a woollen blanket. An earthen lamp is lit and kept before them. An urn of water is kept near, and rice, apricot leaves and grass are kept on it. Fragrant kindling is burned in the surroundings. The urn is called a 'kumbh'. Both the girl and boy pray. The boy keeps a *parandi* on the widow's head. A woman combs the girl's hair and braids the *parandi* into it. After this, the boy keeps a nose-pin on the girl's hand and the married girl fixes the nose-pin on her nose. This is followed by a feast arranged for relatives and friends. No pandit is needed for this custom as well.

The custom of traditional marriage is organised on a grand scale for Gaddi weddings. The boy's body is rubbed with a cleaning mixture (*vatna*). Three black woollen threads are tied on his right wrist, so that he is protected from bad omens. His mother covers him with a red dupatta and takes him to the veranda, where he is then bathed. After he is bathed, the black woollen threads are removed, and the boy kicks a pitcher of burning coals to overturn it, so that if any evil shadow had fallen over him while bathing it would now be diffused by the overturned coals. Then the pandit ties a sacred thread to his wrist which is called a 'kangna'. He is simultaneously offered ghee and jaggery to eat. After this, the boy is dressed like a yogi. Four earrings in his ears, a dhoti on his waist, and a mendicant's bag kept on his shoulder. Then the pandit washes his hands and feet with water and sprinkles a few drops of water on his face. This is considered as a holy dip in the waters of the Badri Narayan, Trilok Nath and Mani Mahesh pilgrimage sites. After this, the boy begs for alms from his relatives. These people give him bits of chapatti and promise to give him sheep and goats as per the economic strengths of their households. Then, the boy is made to sit in a basket, dry grass is kept on his head, and a knife is kept over it.

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The boy's maternal uncle (*mama*) holds a utensil of mustard oil, he pours that oil on the boy's head. He fixes an arrow in a bow and aims it at the head of a dead goat. This is followed by giving him ghee and jaggery again, and then he ties a white scarf on his head and wears a white kurta. He still has the red sheet. Gifts are sent to the girl from the boy's side; these include clothes, a comb, dried dates, raisins, millets, and rice, they are taken to the girl's house in the form of a procession. The boy's sister-in-law lines his eyes with kohl, and ties a *sehra* on his head. The Brahmin priest takes a plate with *jyot* and moves it around the boy's head three times, and the boy's mother takes three chapattis which she moves around his head three times and then throws in three directions.<sup>236</sup> Then the boy sits in the palanquin kept in the veranda. Here, the boy's mother gives him her breasts to suckle. Four carriers lift the palanquin and take it to a wooden parrot belonging to the girl. The boy, his mother and the priest pray to the bird. An urn is kept before the boy, the boy puts money in this and then the marriage procession leaves for the girl's house. This procession comprises the boy's friends and family. Tootani and drums are beaten as the marriage procession moves.

<sup>236</sup> *Jyot*, lit., flame or light. Here, the plate or *thali* carries small bowls with wicks burning in them.

The procession rests in one of the houses of the girl's village and then sets off for the girl's house again. The girl's mother welcomes the boy in the entrance to their house. She moves the plate with jyot around the boy's head seven times and throws three chapattis in the veranda. Then, the mother-in-law leaves, and the father-in-law comes and places a white cloth around the boy's neck, he washes his feet and performs prayers for him. The Brahmin priests accompanying them carry rice, walnuts, flowers etc. in leaves which they then give to the girl's family. The boy is then taken into the veranda and made to sit in front of the girl. The priest then holds the boy and girl by their necks and makes their shoulders touch three times. They are then given gram flour; they blow it on each other. Flames burn on both sides of the boy and girl. Then the girl hands seven twigs of the jasmine flower to the boy. The boy presses these soft branches under his feet one by one, this way the boy and girl are introduced to each other.

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This way, the girl's father hands her over to the boy, and then he washes the feet of the couple. Then, Ganesh, Brahma, Vishnu, Kumbh and a lit flame are worshipped. The boy puts red colour on the girl's sheet, the priest keeps 4-paise, walnuts, grass, flowers, and some rice in the girl's palms (*bukk*). The boy keeps his palms over the girl's palms and the priest ties their hands together with the girl's dupatta. After this, the boy is taken inside, and the couple is made to sit before a picture of Kamdev, where the girl's mother and sisters comb her hair. They sing songs while tending to her hair.

After this, an edge of the girl's sheet of cloth is tied with the boy's dupatta and the girl's maternal uncle lifts her, taking them both to a terrace below where a havan is conducted and their marriage ritual is performed around it. Here, the girl's father washes the couple's feet again and Ganesh, Brahma, Vishnu, Kumbh, four saints and the four Vedas, etc. are prayed to. Roasted barley is then put into a basket. The boy takes a fistful of the barley and divides it into three piles. The girl's brother uses his right hand to make the piles collapse. This custom is performed so that if there was any relationship between the boy and girl before this, then it is considered to have ended after this. After this, the boy and girl walk around the sacred fire four times from right to left (clockwise). The men and women standing nearby start singing when they begin walking.

After this custom concludes, the boy places the girl in a palanquin and takes her to his home, he also takes her dowry along. The wife is welcomed with numerous customs and songs when she reaches her husband's home.

The boy's mother prays to the married couple. After this, the couple walks four times around an earthen lamp kept before a picture of Kamdev. An urn of water, a parandi, and pomegranates are kept near the earthen lamp. Here, the priest lifts the girl's veil (*ghund*) and two men loosen the threads tied to the wrists of the boy and girl, those men become the spiritual brothers of the girl and boy from that moment onwards. Then, the relatives and friends present gifts to the couple. The girl is also made to lift her veil and given a gift for it. This is followed by feast and song.



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In one Gaddi song, the groom is called 'kannh' and he is advised that he should not wander about like an unmarried man but should now shoulder the responsibilities of marriage.<sup>237</sup>

Gaddi people are farmers and pastoralists. Sheep and goats are their primary property. They take their animals to graze in the Kangra, Mandi and Suket valleys in winter, and go to Chamba and Lahore after crossing the Dhauladhar, in summer. Many of them have land on both sides of the mountain. They cultivate wheat in Kangra in the winters and sow the summer crops in Bharmour, on the other side of the Dhauladhar.

Gaddi people pray to Lord Shiva. They believe that Lord Shiva lives on the peak of Mani Mahesh at Kailash Parbat. The area of Bharmour is also called the land of Shiva. According to Gaddi people, Lord Shiva lives on Kailash for six months, and descends to Pialpur in the Assu month, he returns to Kailash in the month of Chetar. These are the months when Gaddi people also travel from one place to another.

The Gaddi people worship many gods of the mountains, forests, and earth. When storms occur in the mountainous regions or icy glaciers break through stone mountains to cause avalanches, these people believe that the demons are fighting with each other. When the Gaddis walk through mountain passes, they pray to the god of that pass to let their animals cross peacefully. The god of the pass is considered to live in a stone tomb, scared of this god, the travellers do not talk loudly while passing by because they believe that loud sounds can make the snow fall on them. It is said that many travellers from the plains keep talking in their ignorance while using these passes, and they die under snow and rocks dislodged by their voices.

Spirits of forest-warriors are said to live in the trees of the forest. These souls prefer to live in the red cedar, silk-cotton, and walnut plants. The Kala-Bir and Narsingh spirits trouble women in the absence of their husbands. When the spirit is in human form and the husband returns, then the spirit's (*bir*) wrath can also kill the husband but worshipping the forest spirit can prevent this from happening. Kehlu Bir (spirit) is believed to live on the slopes of the mountain.

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When this is angry, it throws mountains and rocks. Female spirits live on the high peaks of the mountains. These are spirits of women, and they are prayed to for the safekeeping of the flock. Bataal is the spirit of the springs, rivers, and waterfalls. She is prayed to by offering khichdi, boiled grains etc. If a piece of land has to be ploughed for the first time, four young women are taken there, their feet are washed, colour is rubbed on their foreheads and their mouths are sweetened with jaggery. The first crop from this newly ploughed field is offered for the service of the god. The god of the household is established on a platform in front of every Gaddi house, the god is worshipped by the family there. Apart from these gods and goddesses, Nagdevta (God of Snakes) is also worshipped. Kailang Nag is worshipped in the form of a scythe, every shepherd keeps this scythe with him, especially when he is grazing his flock somewhere away. There are different days for worshipping different gods and goddesses.

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<sup>237</sup> *Kannh*: Kanhaiya, or Krishna

If one has to think of the agricultural life of a tribe that can be understood completely, the Gaddi agrarian lifestyle comes to mind. Barley is their staple grain, and they grow it themselves. They roast barley to make *sattu*. This *sattu* is extremely useful for them during their mountainous journeys. They use honey instead of sugar. They sometimes eat the meat of goats and sheep. But, usually, they survive on the milk of their animals. In Mandi, the Gaddi people prefer to eat the salt of the Gumma mines. They use the wool of their sheep to make their clothes. The Gaddi women straighten the wool and wrap it around the whorl of the *terna*. These people look exceptionally beautiful in their white cloaks and high caps. Black dogs are their companions at day and night, many of these dogs also hunt tigers. The iron collar around their neck saves them during their fights with tigers.

The Gaddis of the Kangra and Chamba valleys live in Lahaul for six months. These people are wise and hard-working, and they are not afraid of the difficulties of their journey. It takes them one month to reach Lahaul from Kangra. Even though they are familiar with every sheep and goat they have in their flock, some sheep and goats also get lost during the journey. Many times, fires can be seen lighting up the mountain passes.

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These fires are lit by the Gaddi people when they rest. They light fires to save themselves from wild animals like tigers and bears, and to ward off the cold. Wearing woollen cloaks and covering themselves with blankets, these people often sleep in the snow, but this never harms them. They often find warmth in their flocks of sheep and goats. They put two to three sheep over themselves to ward off the cold. They hide in the passes of the mountains when it rains. Their sheep are raised well, and the Bhotiya traders of Kumaon also buy them to load cargo for the journey from Kumaon to Tibet. In Lahore, the place where these flocks graze is called *saar* or *bann*. These areas are divided into plots for different shepherds. Every plot is clearly demarcated, and they can be occupied only by seeking them from the Raja of Kullu or the Thakur of Lahaul. Nowadays, people have also started selling these plots of land and so they are no longer the property of their original owners. Even though the former owners have no authority over these sold plots, the flocks of the new owner go to the pasture of the older owner, stay there for about a day, and leave manure in the form of their droppings. Every time they pass, the Gaddi people give one sheep to the Thakur or Negi as revenue. The Gaddi people occasionally give one or two sheep to the village people, these sheep are killed, and a feast is organised. This is called '*bhagti*'.

The Gaddi women are known for their beauty. Free and open lifestyles, living on a diet of milk, and Aryan blood are the three primary reasons for their beauty. Their facial features are slanting and clear — sharp noses, bright eyes, and very delicate and pretty faces.

When compared with the Brahmin and Rajput beauties of Palam, Gaddi women have bright and pleasant dispositions. Many of them look like queens of the mountains. Their beauty has been expressed in many Pahari songs. Maharaja Sansar Chand, the famous ruler of Kangra and patron of Kangra paintings, also fell in love with a Gaddi woman and made her his queen.

Sansar Chand came to tour Bandla village and lost himself in the beauty of a beautiful Gaddi woman. This love story is expressed in the following folk song:

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Carrying drums, the King came to the village  
The Gaddan had come for the fair,  
Oh, my handsome Gaddi.

He held her arm, married her,  
Covered her with his cloth,  
Oh, my handsome Gaddi.

Now stop sleeping on the ground,  
You'll have beds to sleep on,  
Oh, my beautiful Gaddan.

Queens sleep on beds,  
I like to sleep on the floor,  
Oh, my handsome King.

Do not eat from plates of leaves,  
Eat from plates of gold,  
My beautiful Gaddan.

Queens eat from plates of gold,  
I prefer eating from plates of leaves,  
Oh, my handsome King.

Leave your woollen cloak, oh Gaddan  
Wear silk clothes,  
My beautiful Gaddan.

Silk clothes are made for Queens,  
My woollen cloak is lovely to me,  
Oh, my handsome King.

One day, the King cleverly asked the Gaddan,  
Is the Gaddi more beloved to you, or me,  
Oh, my beautiful Gaddan.

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I like you a little, my King,  
But the Gaddi's love pierces me like a knife,

Oh, my handsome King.

I miss the lambs a little,  
And so miss the Gaddi the most,  
My Hari Singh Gaddi.

As the Gaddis graze sheep below the palace,  
I can hear the sound of their flute,  
Oh, my handsome Gaddi.

Gaddi people dance and sing during fairs and festivals. They play large drums when they dance. Only men dance. The women stand nearby and watch. The women adorn themselves with jewellery when they come to see the dance. There is no doubt in the fact that seeing these beautiful women intoxicates the men, and they keep dancing for hours. The men drink lugdi and feast before they begin dancing.

The Gaddi people of today recall the love of Kunjoo and Chanchlo, renowned Gaddi lovers. Kunjoo used to cross stormy rivers and terrifying forests to meet Chanchlo. He was not as afraid of wild animals as he was of his enemies. Chanchlo tried to explain to her lover, "Do not leave your home at stormy nights, your enemies have loaded guns." Chanchlo has the desire to have a lovely house with mirrors placed in its doors and windows. This desire has been expressed in many songs of the Gaddi people. When Chanchlo comes to know that Kunjoo was going to the valley of Lahaul far away, she weeps while washing her clothes in the stream. Chanchlo asks her beloved for a symbol of his love, and he gives her his ring. Chanchlo gives him a blue kerchief in return.

Chamba's pastures are your home, Kunjooa,  
Say something, I want to hear your voice.

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I weep as I wash my clothes,  
I find your button, a symbol of your love,  
Oh Kunjooa, your button reminds me of you.

Your bangles lie on fair arms, oh Chanchlo  
Flower-bracelets are your symbol,  
A chintz kerchief from your hands,  
The colour reminds me of you,  
Oh, my life, this colour is you.

Hold my hand, oh Kunjooa,  
Give me a sign of your love,  
I took the symbol of your heart  
Truly, my life,

This love is the celebration of this world, truly my beloved.

Set yourself up in the pastures of Kufri, my Kunjooa,  
There you'll find the celebration,  
Truly my life,  
Meeting you, my life celebrates,  
Oh, my Chanchlo, this is the celebration of life.

Fulmo and Ranjhoo's love song is also famous among the Gaddis like Kunjoo and Chanchlo's song. Fulmo's crying words 'Words Gone By' (*Gallan Hoyiaan Beetiyaa*) are sung with great passion.

In many songs, the stories of the love between the sister-in-law and brother-in-law are also sung about. Hari Singh's love for the wife of his elder brother is often expressed in song. Hari Singh plays the flute on top of the mountain, so that the music of the flute reaches his sister-in-law. Hari Singh decides to build a house on top of the mountain. He looks at the stormy river and crosses it because the bridge is being guarded by the police. Sister-in-law explains to Hari Singh, do not destroy my married life like this. But then lost in the love of Hari Singh, she forgets everything.

## Chapter 51 The Folk Songs of Kangra

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If religious hymns are supposed to have originated from the heavens, it is said that folk songs are born from the earth. The songs of every country are the soul of its soil. The passions, pain of separation, and emotions of the citizens of countries are expressed through folk songs. The oldest and most recent examples of poetry can be found in the folk songs of the motherland. These songs carry the deep, instinctual voices of the hearts of people. At times, this sound flows so freely and powerfully that its flow cannot be inhibited.

The life of the Kangra people can be found painted in its folk songs just like the folk songs of all other people in the world. The folk songs of Kangra describe the beauty of the mountains just like Punjabi folk songs sing the beauty of the plains. Deep valleys with clear water flowing through them, gushing waterfalls, golden fields of paddy, vast gardens of wildflowers, the shade of the *dadni* tree, the shepherdess playing the algoze, are all described in the songs. The Kangra people sing, “*Jeena Pahad Da Jeena*”<sup>238</sup>, express their love for their motherland, and inspire us living in the plains to visit the hills. The young girls of the hills believe that the wonders of urban life are hollow; they sing about the lies of the cities and praise the religiosity of the hill people.

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The people of Kangra like living here; they like its cold weather, solitude, rivers spouting from the hills, and the life of the hills which is distant from the deception, dishonesty, and immorality of the city.

The beauty of the hills and the lifestyle of their people have been enriched by Jwalamukhi and other temples. That place on earth chosen by the fire goddess as her preferred abode, where the light of the Devi continues to attract pilgrims from near and far, where snow-laden peaks of the Dhauladhar fan the valley — it will not be an exaggeration for the residents of this place to call their home *Vaikunth*.<sup>239</sup>

The folk songs of Kangra have a special flavour. The gentle romance of the region mixes with its religious tune to create interesting music. Lord Krishna occupies a special place in these folk songs. In one song, the gopis try to attract the God towards themselves and sing tongue-in-cheek, “Why are you shy with us, oh loved one?” The girls go home and complain to their mothers about a young boy:

“There is a young lad at the banks of the Yamuna, Oh mother!  
He does not let us take water.  
He makes puppies come after us,

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<sup>238</sup> ‘Living means living on the mountain’

<sup>239</sup> *Vaikunth* refers to the celestial abode of Lord Vishnu in Hindu belief; it can also be understood as heaven.

Oh mother, he shows us no concern!  
 His eyes as black as a deer,  
 Oh mother, he shows us no concern!  
 There is a young boy at the banks of the Yamuna, Oh mother!  
 He does not let us take water.”

Young men and beautiful girls, Gaddis and Gaddans who grow up in this romantic space sing songs of their true love, openly and boldly — they sing about a lover calling his beloved to come and rest under the cool shade of the *baratu* tree and some lovelorn girl sends love-letters to her lover through a *tilyar*:<sup>240</sup>

“Fly, fly my dear tilyar  
 Take a long flight  
 Ask my dear lover  
 Why did you forget your beloved?”

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These songs of separation have developed as a result of Kangra youth leaving the valley in search of employment. Like Punjab, Kangra is also known as an area contributing large numbers of forces to the army; with military service considered a duty, many youths from the valley serve in the armed forces. Kangra youth used to join the armies of the Rajput kings during Mughal rule. So, the life of a Kangra woman becomes a love story of separation. The one who is inventing excuses before leaving to console the queen of his heart, asks her to remain sound in body and mind with the fresh, cool water of the rivers and waterfalls which give life to the flowers of Kangra, to seek comfort in its gardens and hills. All these images enrich the songs of Kangra.

The newlywed girl whose husband has gone far away, is troubled by her mother-in-law all the more. She taunts her, and strictly commands her to perform household chores. This troubled girl finds pain in the in-laws’ house and tries to feel at peace by singing, “Let the country of the in-laws burn to ashes!”

Not everyone at home is unsympathetic for this sad girl. Often, the younger brother of the husband sympathises with her, causing her to eventually fall in love with her brother-in-law. There are many songs depicting the hesitant love between the *bhabi-devar*.<sup>241</sup>

The people of Kangra do not only join the army, some of them also take up trades and businesses and remain away from home for months altogether. This is how a folk song describes the emotions of a forlorn woman:

“Oh, my tall green date tree,  
 Yellow leaves in tow,  
 What should women do,

<sup>240</sup> A small, brown or black migratory bird found in India and Pakistan.

<sup>241</sup> Lit., married woman and brother-in-law.

If their husbands are always travelling?

Like a kingdom weeps without a king,  
A patient without a doctor,  
The same is the condition of a woman without a husband,  
All she feels is loneliness.

A parrot was speaking in a garden,  
I thought it was the gardener.  
I gave my heart to you,  
My body's cage is empty now."

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Kangra women love their mothers and brothers as much as they love their husbands. This is how a woman misses her mother and brothers:

"Who will colour my bangles?  
Who will fix my earrings?  
These are very long distances.  
Meet me, dear mother, try somehow,  
Meet me, sweet mother, try somehow,  
I have found where I can see my mother,  
Where I can meet my brother, elated.  
Meet me, dear mother, try somehow."

She prays, counts her days, and soon, her travelling husband returns home. Even though there are doubts in her heart and complaints spring into her mind, she remained loyal to her husband and does not meander to the sepoy sitting near the well and asking her for water to drink. The same sepoy turns out to be her husband. This is perhaps the best of the Kangra folk songs:

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"Oh, woman standing at the well,  
Give me a sip of water, beautiful one.  
Oh sepoy, I hold a pitcher and a bowl,  
Drink by yourself, I am not your friend.  
I drink by myself every day,  
I want to drink from your hands today, oh nimble one!  
Oh sepoy, I'll break the pitcher into pieces!  
Oh, come along, slender one!  
Oh sepoy, two boys like you are my father's servants, oh traveller!  
Oh, slender one, two women like you are my mother's water-maids!



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On reaching home, the mother-in-law asks,  
 Oh, dear daughter what took you so long?  
 Dear mother, a boy began fighting with me at the well,  
 I told him I am not his friend.  
 Daughter-in-law, how were his eyes?  
 What did he look like?  
 His eyes were like sister-in-law oh mother,  
 And he looked like you.  
 Oh, daughter-in-law fill a bowl with oil,  
 Go serve your sepoy, dear slender one!”

There are some songs which express inter-caste marriages in Kangra. A Rajput man married a Dalit woman; the song expressing this is found in many forms. The lyrics are of love that does not care about casteism or discrimination based on status.

Along with these love stories, some songs express the stories of Kangra which are well-known like Kungu, Gangi, Mohna, Fulmo-Ranjha. These songs have a historical background, and we become so immersed in the characters of these stories that we begin to identify with their problems and see our own silhouettes behind every word. The story of Ranjhoo and Fulmo is the most representative story of this area. This is why I will first explain the whole story in prose form and showcase the lifestyle of Kangra in it.

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Ranjhoo has been depicted as a disloyal lover in the song. Infidelity is an unforgivable offence which I refuse to tolerate. That is why I have portrayed him as a loyal lover in the end [in my retelling of it here]. The mirasis of Punjab used to sing *Sandan* in long *heq* style, similarly the Dholru of Kangra are equally important and they are sung in harmony with the beat of the drum.<sup>242</sup>

The residents of Kangra are also very brave. They have many *vaar* poems,<sup>243</sup> like the *vaar* about Ram Singh Pathania, which talks about the bravery of soldiers in wars and thus proves the courage of the Kangra people.

Some modern-day traditions and expressions have also become part of these songs. Like in one song, the *gori* (woman) sings the praises of her ‘recruit’, and in another song *gori* is inspired to educate her children in a school and take care of her garden in a bungalow in the plains.

Gaddi songs occupy a respectable position in the folk songs of Kangra. Just like us, the Gaddi people revel in folk songs at the times of marriage, engagement, birth, *mundan*, fairs and festivals. They sing these songs to feel free of mundane daily routines, their spirits dance upon

<sup>242</sup> *Mirasis* and *Dholru* are caste groups who traditionally work as singers and dancers during celebrations and social occasions; *Sandan* refers to a folk legend, and *heq* is the style in which it is sung. *Heq* is a prolonged sing-song style usually acting as a prelude to the singing.

<sup>243</sup> Long poems about the courage of warriors.

singing them. Their songs are pure, clear, and expressive, just like them. Since they work very hard in the open, their songs also depict these experiences. Romance intermingles with the lives of the people of Kangra just like frolic does. A very pious loving relationship develops between a boy and girl playing in meadows and forests, like innocent birds in a forest — depicted in songs, this relationship imparts a beautiful flavour to music.

Despite their simple food and clothing, and constant hard work, these people are very satisfied with their lives and they dismiss royal lifestyles in glass palaces (*sheesh mahal*), preferring their own simple lives over that luxury. One of the folk songs tells the story of a beautiful Gaddi woman who is brought to the palace of Raja Sansar Chand, but the young girl misses her flock of sheep and does not forget her Gaddi culture and language. Other than simple lives, if the Gaddis are in love with something, it is the city of Chamba — their city.

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Their songs breathe in the *Chaugan* and Ravi river.<sup>244</sup>

“The river of Chamba, so beautiful,  
I’ll stroll at the banks of the Ravi.  
I’ll sit in the cool shade of the peepal,  
The shade will remain throughout the day.  
The high streams, meandering rivers,  
The Chaugan of Chamba is beautiful.”

The Ravi river is mentioned over and over again in the songs of the Gaddi people of Chamba. They are scared of this river and love it as well.

“Oh Ravi, do not gush so loudly,  
It scares me.  
The necklace adorning Chamba’s neck,  
I am scared of you.  
Your world is meandering, and you throw hundreds of tantrums,  
Oh Ravi, please do not throw tantrums.  
I want to sit on your banks,  
I want to sing your songs.”

The beauty of the Kangra hills — their snow-capped peaks, streams of cool and clear water, white flower laden kaintha trees, bushes of wild roses, pink orchids, couples of sarus cranes playing on river banks, are not only evident in the surroundings but also in the faces of the people and the folk songs.

The folk songs of Kangra are the mirror of the lifestyle of its people.

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<sup>244</sup> *Chaugan*, here, is a term from the Pahari language which refers to large green grounds/plain areas in the hills of Himachal.

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The flow of music tells us that the young boys and girls mentioned in the songs also have delicate and artistic natures. There is a softness of music in their conversation, their faces carry the delicacy of songs, their hearts are as clear as water, and their entire lives are pure like flowing water. These songs convey the lifestyle of the people of the hills, their emotions, dreams, aspirations, and romance. We must feel proud of this clear, honest simplicity and ocean of beauty expressed in the folk songs of Kangra. The poetry of folk songs is beautiful. The richness of emotions and truth are the primary qualities of this poetry.

These songs have been created in the colloquial tongue. They have unique clarity and originality. The Punjabi of the Kangra folk songs is similar to the Punjabi of the Doaba region. Some words are spoken in exactly the same way as Doabi is. Perhaps the only difference is that these songs are sung loudly and in order to sing them in tune, the first and last words are slightly elongated. These words are elongated with the help of *kanna* or *bihari* which add a different flavour to these words.<sup>245</sup> It is probably natural or obligatory to use these tones for someone living in faraway places or nooks of the valley. The language used in Kangra folk songs is honest, sweet Punjabi. The songs of Bilaspur, Mandi, Suket and Chamba are also included in the folk songs of Kangra. They are all in Punjabi, and at times, it becomes difficult to distinguish whether these songs are from Kangra or from royal areas.

I felt great pleasure in exploring this treasure of people's hearts in the form of oral history in collective form. The freshness and evergreen traits of these folk songs inspire us to read them over and over. The songs are fresh and pure, they will not lose their lustre even with the powerful sands of time.

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<sup>245</sup> *Kanna* refers to the 'aa' vowel sound in Punjabi. It is a *maatra* (vowel sign or symbol). *Bihari* is also a *maatra*, and it can be read as the long 'ii' or 'ee' sound.

Chapter 52  
*Gallan Hoyian Beetian*<sup>246</sup>

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*Badooey sugaadoey tu kajo jhaankdi*  
*Jhakhaan kajo mardi*  
*Do hath batne de laayan Fulmo*  
*Gallan hoyi beetian*

What do you see here and there,  
What do you look for?  
Fulmo, apply vatna on me,  
Let bygones be bygones.

Fulmo was a beautiful Gaddi woman from Chamba. sixteen years old, lovely body, and flaming, singing youth. When she would leave with her flock of sheep, everyone would stare at her, they would commend her beauty. Black hair, a moon-like forehead, and lamb-like dancing eyes. Sharp nose, red lips, round chin, and pink apple-like cheeks. Long, shapely neck, heavy breasts, a tall, slender woman. The black necklace around her neck enhanced her beauty. When she walked, it felt like the graceful movement of a swan, and her loveliness would spread its fragrance all around.

One day, Fulmo went to the step-well to fill water, she dipped her earthen pot into the water, and heard it splash in the well. She was about to lift the pot out when she saw a handsome young man wearing an embroidered cap, a flute in his hand, staring at her. They fell in love at first sight. They could not say it out loud, but their eyes said what they were feeling for each other. It appeared like the moon and the sun had met. Fulmo lifted the pot, but her feet had become heavy, and they refused to walk.

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She felt like electricity had passed through her body. Upon feeling this way, she started looking around herself to check if someone else had seen her this way. Her feet walked slowly, but her mind drew her back. When she was returning home, swaying, it appeared like the sea of passion was moving furiously. Her large, intoxicating eyes shone like a deer's eyes in spring. She turned back to see; he was still sitting there. Their eyes met again, and the secret messages that one heart sends to another, were sent again.

Fulmo came to know that this youth was the only son of the headman (*lambardar*) of a nearby village named Lachhman. His name was Ranjhoo. After that, Ranjhoo would turn up with his flute wherever Fulmo took her sheep to graze and express his love for her with the sweet tunes of his flute. The wind would be saturated with the melodious music of the flute. The cranes would look exceptionally beautiful amidst dark clouds, but one who has seen the depths of his beloved's black eyes does not care about the clouds. They promised to live and die together.

There was an oil-presser's house in Fulmo's neighbourhood. One day, Ranjhoo took mustard seeds and went to the oil-presser's house to get oil extracted. He saw Fulmo sitting

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<sup>246</sup> Lit., Words Gone By.

with her friends and spinning yarn, across the street. She looked like the queen of the group of girls. The black necklace looked pretty on her fair neck, and when she would laugh, her pearl-like teeth would look like jasmine flowers in a garden. When she saw Ranjhoo, she forgot to spin the yarn, and the tip of the yarn fell from her hands. As per his excuse, Ranjhoo was supervising the extraction of oil from the mustard, but his eyes were fixed on Fulmo's face. They kept looking at each other but could not say anything, so that the carefully guarded secret of their love was preserved. Fulmo began blushing out of embarrassment. Her face kept changing colour.

Once, both of them came across each other at the furnace where grains are roasted. Fulmo's friend Inder Devi was getting her corn roasted, she asked the Jhioori to make her popcorns crispier. By this time, Ranjhoo also arrived with a basket of corn, and sometime later, Fulmo as well. Even though it was Ranjhoo's turn to get his corn roasted, he said that he could wait longer, and he was not in a hurry.

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This excuse gave him more time to gaze at Fulmo, and he left the furnace when all the boys and girls left after getting popcorn.

There was a historic temple of Lord Krishna in Fulmo's village. A huge fair was organised on Full Moon, New Moon, and Sankranti, and groups of men and women from the neighbouring villages would arrive, beating their drums and cymbals. Ranjhoo always attended this fair. The priest of the village, Sant Ram, was wise. He would narrate the story of the *Bhagwad Purana* with great pleasure. The group of women would sit on one side of the mat, the pandit priest in the middle, and men and boys on the other side. Old men closed their eyes, meditated on God's name, and savoured the narration. But the boys only gazed at the girls. Ranjhoo's gaze would remain fixed on Fulmo, and both of them had no idea of what the pandit was saying.

The fragrance of love cannot be hidden, and Ranjhoo and Fulmo's love story came to be openly discussed in the village. People would see Ranjhoo coming to Fulmo's street. He would come for buying sheep, or milk, even though he had many cattle at home and so had no shortage of milk. When Ranjhoo's father came to know, he tried to make the boy understand that Fulmo was the daughter of a poor shepherd, and so he could not let him marry her because this would shame their household. He was a lambardar, and owned 20 acres of land, while Fulmo's father was merely a shepherd. Her father only owned 50 sheep, one cow and one small thatched hut; he did not have any land. Lachhman scolded him, saying that if Ranjhoo would not change his mind, he would bequeath all his property to his younger brother. When he saw that this had no effect on Ranjhoo, he quickly chose a girl from a nearby village and got him engaged to her. Not only this, he also finalised the date of Ranjhoo's wedding.

After hearing his father's scolding and warnings, Ranjhoo was of two minds. He was conflicted between the honour and property of his household on one hand, and the queen of his dreams on the other. If he agreed with his father, he would have to give up his beloved, and if he listened to the voice of his heart, he would be cut off from his family and would have to leave his home. He even forgot his flute, and drowning in a sea of worries, he left for the fields.

The maize was ripening, and their covers were turning black. The white, ram-like flowers of the canna plant swayed in the breeze, as if thousands of *chaur* were being swept.

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Lovelorn, Fulmo went to the river in search of Ranjhoo. The wild cherry trees were full of deep red flowers. A couple of honeybees were sitting on a flower, and both of them drank nectar together. A bumblebee buzzed over the flowers. A pair of doves sat on a tree, they were touching their beaks together, in love. Seeing this, Fulmo recalled her love. The peacock cried, but no peahen was nearby. Fulmo's sorrow increased upon hearing the peacock's cries. Finally, she spotted Ranjhoo sitting under a tree. He looked sad, and clouds of worry hung over his head. When Fulmo repeatedly asked him why he was upset, he told her about his conflict.

Fulmo said, "Oh, my Husband, my God, friend of my heart, let's leave this place and go to Amritsar. You can take a job there. I will look after your household, and when you will return home tired, I will serve you."

"I cannot work in the city. I feel suffocated in the narrow lanes and noise of the city."

"I cannot live without you, I feel very lonely without you, my soul is restless without you." Saying this, Fulmo shrivelled like a flower and fell, like jasmine flowers get drenched in the rain and fall on the ground.

Fulmo felt like her lover's heart had changed. When Ranjhoo took her leave, she wanted to say something, but she could not say it. Her heart was full of sorrow. She covered her face with both palms and wept. When she felt lighter, she returned home with great difficulty.

Santo, Fulmo's neighbour came to their home the next day early in the morning, and said, "Oh Fulmo, have you heard that Ranjhoo's marriage preparations are being undertaken, and vatna will be applied on him today?" Fulmo became terrified and could not answer. When she heard the drums beating, she ran to the lambardar's house. She saw that marriage preparations were underway in Lachhman's house and vatna was being applied on Ranjhoo. Ranjhoo's aunts, sisters-in-law and neighbours rubbed vatna on him and sang. Fulmo entered their house.

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Indoctrinated by his parents day and night, Ranjhoo became embarrassed upon seeing her and said, "Fulmo, why do you not apply vatna on me? Why do you keep standing?" Hearing this, a knife pierced Fulmo's heart. All his promises of immortal love were proven false. She thought that it is rightly said that men are deceitful, and one should not fall in love with young men. After robbing her body and destroying her youth, now he said, "Why do you not you rub vatna on me?" Her moon-like face shrivelled and turned dark, her feet began trembling and cold sweat broke out on her body. She said, "Ranjhoo, your aunts should apply vatna on you, they are the ones happy with your marriage. Why should I apply it?" Her soul was devastated by her lover's betrayal and she returned home, crying.

The woman's heart is as soft as the petals of a rose. Like the hot loo of the summer months burns the rose petals, the fire of separation burns the woman's soft heart. Fulmo was not only being burned by the fire of separation, she also kept feeling helpless and disappointed.

She felt that this was not love, it was only fun for him, just like a child likes a toy but throws it away after playing with it for four days and starts looking for a new toy soon after. Ranjhoo's behaviour also turned out like this.

The mountains cried for her sorrow and anxiety; the trees also threw their leaves with sympathy. Her sheep were also upset upon seeing her sad, and they refused to graze. A couple of sparrows lived between the wooden planks of their roof; they used to chirp every day. These birds also forgot their chirping upon seeing Fulmo's sad face, they sat like they were in mourning.

Fulmo was greatly taken aback, and all her wishes and desires vanished. She could only see darkness. Pitch dark nights, and the terrifying hoot of the owl created more fear in her heart. Her heart felt like the moon had left the sky and the sky had become widowed. "Oh, stars of the sky! Become my witness, see that I was true to my love until my last breath. Oh, birds and trees! You are my witness that I have been faithful." Lost in these thoughts, Fulmo blew at the flame of the earthen lamp. The flame died, and so did her wishes and desires.

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How could she sleep, she wept, hungry and thirsty; she lay down on the floor and covered her face with a black blanket.

The next day, the red sun emerged from the mountain like a burning iron plate. The narsingha could be heard from afar, and the beats of the drum entered her ears. Ranjhoo was sitting in the palanquin, the sehra on his head. His father and relatives followed him in the procession. The drumbeats were full of sorrow and they sounded like something terrible had happened. Ranjhoo saw that four men carried a funeral bier saying, '*Ram Naam Satya Hai*' (Ram's name is true). When he carefully inspected the procession, he identified Fulmo's father and brother. Seeing them, he was stunned, all colour left his face. His old, suppressed love resurged. He asked his palanquin-carriers to keep the palanquin on the ground. By this time, Fulmo's corpse had been kept on the pyre; Ranjhoo uncovered her face and began crying loudly upon seeing his beloved. He set the pyre on fire, sat near it, and began crying loudly.

The flames talked to the sky as his beloved's beautiful body burned. Ranjhoo could not stop himself, he threw his sehra into the fire, and then threw himself into the fire as well. The people felt like they were seeing Fulmo's laughing face in the tall flames. It seemed like it was saying, "I am very happy that both of us are together again."

**Part V: Solving the Problem of Food Security of the Nation, and Beautifying  
Chandigarh**



Chapter 53

**Foundation of the Green Revolution and Solving the Problem of Food Security for Millions of People**  
(1955-1966)

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There had been a big fight between Kairon and Sachar, which made me feel that doing any progressive work in Punjab was now difficult. Other than being a Development Commissioner, I was also in-charge of the Department of Rehabilitation. The work of allotting land was almost over. This work was being done from the building of Islamia College, Jalandhar. The administrators of Lyallpur Khalsa College sent me an application asking me to allot the building of Islamia College to them because their building in Lyallpur had been taken away by Islamia College, Jalandhar and both the institutions were talking about this exchange. I considered this a genuine demand because Lyallpur Khalsa College had settled in Jalandhar now; they were thus allotted this building. When Sachar got to know about this exchange, he became very angry. He wanted to allot this building to the Arya Pratinidhi Sabha. My decision was right and Sardar Ujjal Singh, who was the Minister of Rehabilitation also supported my decision.

When I went to meet Sachar, I saw that he was fuming. I told him that whatever I had done was correct and justified.

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I felt sad that this person who was the Chief Minister of Punjab could not rise above communalism while thinking about any issue.

My health had deteriorated a lot because of the pressure of work, and I had to take injections of vitamin B-complex. I met an old friend while touring through Gurgaon.<sup>247</sup> He said, "You have become very weak. You should do only that much work which you can perform comfortably. This government will not build the Taj Mahal for you." I told him that one does not die of working hard but trivialisation and injustice hurts one's soul, and this was the reason for my weakness.

My friend P.N. Thapar got transferred and became the Advisor of the Planning Commission. During those days, Sai Ajit Prasad Jain became the Minister of Agriculture, Government of India. He was fully familiar with my job profile. He got Thapar sahib transferred from his job in the Planning Commission and appointed him as his P.A. One day, Thapar called me and told me that there was a vacancy in the position of Vice-President in the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (I.C.A.R.), and that I should come to Delhi. I met Kairon and told him that I wanted to go to Delhi because nothing could be done in Punjab without unnecessary conflict. He informed Sachar. Sachar happily accepted this suggestion from Kairon.

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<sup>247</sup> Gurugram, today.

I reached Delhi in September 1965 and took charge of I.C.A.R. (Indian Council of Agricultural Research). ICAR is a large organisation and agricultural research is its main responsibility. The Vice-President of this Council supervised many research committees which would conduct research on different crops. The headquarters of the cotton committee were in Bombay. The committee for coconut and betel nut was stationed in Kerala. Jute was in Calcutta, tobacco in Madras and oilseeds in Hyderabad. I was supposed to travel all over India to supervise these committees. I doubted whether I could accomplish this task successfully. However, when I became busy with work, I began feeling stronger than before. While working at I.C.A.R., I noticed that there were no books available about the crops of our country and related issues. A group of Russian scientists came to meet me.

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I called my secretary and asked him which book could be gifted to them. He brought a book named Poisonous Plants of India written by Colonel Shri Ram Nath Chopra. I believed that it was inappropriate to gift such a book to scientists from a friendly country visiting us. I developed a big project regarding books, to rid ourselves of this problem. The scientists of our country who could write about their work, were encouraged to write books and appropriate payment was given to them. I established a Publication Division to continue this project and recruited editors, photographers, and artists for this job. There was a photographer named Hari Krishan Gorkha who had worked with me in Punjab. He would sit in the car with me while touring the states and take photographs of farms, villages, crops, animals, and farmers, under my supervision. Ten thousand photographs were clicked during those tours. This photographic treasure worked wonders in terms of illustrating the book. We had photographs on every topic. I wrote five books about the crops of India and farmers of India under this project. All these books became immensely popular. Dr. B.P. Pal who was the Director of the Pusa institute also contributed to this project and wrote books about roses and flowering vines. Then, I began focusing on the monographs of the scientists. I made them write monographs on algae and fungi. All the prominent scientists of our country contributed to this work.

An American advisor named Malcolm Orchard opposed this programme. He believed that ICAR should only publish bulletins for farmers. I believed that both bulletins and books should be published. During this time, I felt that many American advisors who had come to our country had no understanding of the problems of our country and they were here just for a good time. A few days after this argument, I fired Malcolm Orchard and he was sent back to America.

Among the American scientists, Dr. Frank Parker proved to be a good friend of our country. He helped our country in the planning of agricultural universities. The first university was established in the Terai under this scheme. I called Partap Singh Kairon and told him that such a university should be established in Ludhiana.

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He picked up this issue very passionately, but the Planning Commission did not help at all. Kairon told them that if they would not help, he would establish this university himself. After that, the Planning Commission came on board.

The annual meeting of the cotton committee used to take place in Bombay. I had to stay in a hotel in Bombay for the meeting, there was a bus-stand nearby. I could not sleep the whole night because the constant noise from this stand disturbed my sleep. Chiman Lal Parikh was the Vice-President of this committee. He invited me to live in his home. I stayed with him for the rest of the trip. He was a Gujrati mill owner and was a good man. In this committee, I noticed that the agricultural directors of the states would give estimates of the cotton crop in their states. All the fabric mill owners would make sure to attend the meetings. When they realized that the crop was good that year, they would reduce the price of buying cotton from the farmers, which would harm the farmers.

The meeting of the coconut committee took place in Trivandrum and Ernakulam, which are big cities in Kerala. Kerala is a beautiful state. There are groves of coconut and betel nut all around. Kerala has a large Christian population. Many plantations of coconut, betel nut and rubber are owned by Christians. When the train passes through their villages, they appear like a Christian country. During these tours, I felt that our country is so vast. People of so many different faiths live here. Our leaders, who do not know any place other than their own states, are like frogs in a well. They consider their own state the whole world, and so should be made to travel across the whole country so that they can understand its diversity. The South Indian states do not understand Hindustani. They all have their own languages like Malayalam in Kerala, Tamil in Tamil Nadu, and Telugu in Andhra Pradesh. The literate people know English, and we North Indians can only converse with them in English. If any language can be called pan-Indian, that is English and not Hindi. English developed the feeling of Indian nationalism within us. The Hindi used in radio or television in today's time is a dictionary language, it is not colloquial. Languages like these have no roots or branches and they survive only with government aid.

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My five-year term completed in September 1960, and I had no idea where I would work then. I took leave for three months and toured Rajasthan. Jaipur, Chittor, Kishangarh, Udaipur, Jodhpur, Kota, and Bundi — I conducted research on old paintings in all these places. Tarlok Singh was the secretary of the Planning Commission. He took great pains to create an advisor's post for me in the Commission, and the job entailed surveying the natural resources of India. My colleagues in the Planning Commission were M.S. Sivaraman and Krishnaswamy. They were both unhappy with the work in this place. When a person rises to a certain point in his career, he becomes distant from the humdrum aspects of life. I also felt that.

In those days, I met Professor Galbraith, who was an American diplomat in India. He was also fascinated by Indian paintings and he had read my books. Both of us toured Kangra valley and visited Nurpur, Guler, Tira Sujanpur, and Alampur. Raja Sansar Chand used to live in Sujanpur and Alampur, and this is where Kangra art developed because of his patronage. During this tour, both of us decided that a book about Indian paintings should be written in a way that even a layperson would be able to understand it. I took leave for three months after this tour. I developed a rough draft of this work and gave it to Galbraith. This book became famous all over the world.

I went to Geneva to participate in a conference of science and technology in 1963. Dr. Hussain Zaheer, Dr. V.K.R.V. Rao, Homi Bhabha, Prof. Becker, and J.R.D. Tata were my companions. It was my first chance to speak at such a prestigious conference. My topic was 'The Natural Resources of India'. I stayed inside my room for two to three days and prepared for my lecture. It was a success. Bhabha and Becker praised me a lot.

Upon returning to India, I met the Finance Minister T.T. Krishnamachari. He asked me what I was there for. The Planning Commission, according to him, was a shelter for old and disabled cows. In those days, the problem of food security had become very serious in India. The Government of India planned to undertake dense farming. T.T. Krishnamachari told me to take charge of this project and solve the problem of food security for the country.

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Sardar Swarn Singh was the Minister of Agriculture at that time. He was my classmate from my days at Government College Lahore. I told him that I was ready to take charge of this project. In those days, there was a lot of chaos in the country because of lack of rains and the country was living on wheat procured from America. I observed that our country could solve the problem of food shortage only if factories of chemical fertilisers were set up and these chemical fertilisers were delivered to the farmers in their farms. Secondly, in those days, we heard that Dr. Borlaug had developed new varieties of wheat which was short and gave large yields.<sup>248</sup> We experimented with this wheat at Pusa Institute. The experiments proved that this was the solution for the country's problem. M.S. Swaminathan, the director of the PUSA institute, passionately worked towards it. I planned to develop the growth of these wheat varieties in the villages and allot one-acre farms in all villages to test them. When the farmers saw that this wheat gave three times more yield than their varieties, they accepted it. As a result, dense farming became highly successful but because of the shortage of chemical fertilisers, the country's need for food grains could not be satisfied. C. Subramaniam became the new Agriculture Minister, he was very astute and wise, but he was not unbiased towards the states. There was a vacancy for the post of secretary in ICAR. He received a list of candidates. A person named Nayar was on the list, he was from Odisha. Reading 'Nayar', a Keralite surname, Subramaniam believed he was from Kerala. When he came to meet him, it became clear that Nayar was a Punjabi, and Subramaniam refused to hire him.

This incident told me that it would be difficult to work with Subramaniam. He was arrogant and did not think anyone was his equal. Due to these circumstances, I decided to return to Punjab.

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<sup>248</sup> Norman Borlaug, American agronomist whose work resulted in the global increase in agricultural output popularly called the Green Revolution.

Chapter 54  
**Chandigarh**  
**Adorning this New City**  
 (1966-68)

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The food-grain shortage in the country was very serious. The work of increasing agricultural productivity was so difficult that it could not even be predicted. Touring all the provinces and implementing the package programme in the fertile areas chosen was no ordinary work. This work had a grave impact on my health, and sciatica pain began in my right leg. This pain was so intense that it would become intolerable at times. I took a holiday of four months in March 1966. During this leave, I read all the older books about agriculture available in the Pusa Institute Library.

During those days, the question about 'Punjabi Suba' (Punjabi Province) emerged, and Punjab's territories were divided into Punjab, Haryana, and Himachal. Both Punjab and Haryana asked for Chandigarh. When a fight breaks out between two cats for a chapatti, the monkey takes the major share.<sup>249</sup> In order to resolve the issue, the Government of India decided to separate Chandigarh from both the states.

Thinking of all these things, I decided to go to Punjab. Dharamvir, a close friend of mine, was posted as the Cabinet Secretary.

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I told him that I was interested in Chandigarh. If the Indian Government would separate it, I would be glad to manage its administration. They accepted this proposal.

I had been associated with Chandigarh from 1952 onwards. In 1952, the Punjab Government had instituted a Landscape Committee for the Chandigarh project. I was the President of this Committee. This Committee had Le Corbusier, Jeanneret and P.L. Verma, the Chief Engineer, as members. I made all the plans for its landscaping and gardens with the help of the Committee. Apart from this, I wanted two museums of art and science to be built in Chandigarh.

The whole world was interested in the Chandigarh project. I decided that a museum should be made in Chandigarh, it would have the pictures of all the important buildings in the city. This museum was established in a new building which functions as the office of the Chief Commissioner and architects today. One corner of this museum also has things from Jeanneret's house. I believe that after Corbusier, Jeanerret did the most important work with dedication, but it is shameful that nobody valued his contributions. Because of working constantly, Jeanneret got cataracts in his eyes and his eyesight failed. He was compelled to

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<sup>249</sup> This is with reference to a children's story in which two cats fight over a *roti/chapatti* and a monkey comes upon the scene. They ask him to judge their sides of the story, and in the process of judgement and division, the monkey slowly keeps taking large portions of the food for himself. Bit by bit, the monkey takes all the food in the name of equally dividing it between the cats, and leaves. The cats look on, confounded.

return to Switzerland. No minister from the Punjab Government gave him a farewell party. When I met him at the Palam airport, he was very sad, and tears filled his eyes. Some months later, he died in his country. It was his wish that his ashes should be submerged in the lake of Chandigarh. His niece brought his ashes, and we submerged them in the lake of the city. In order to keep the memory of Jeanneret alive, I named the big building where the Chief Commissioner, Chief Engineer and Architect work, after him. I fixed an engraved plate on the Sector 5 house where he used to live, it said, 'Jeanneret lived here from 1952-1964'. Jeanneret had made bamboo chairs which were extremely comfortable and made lamps out of *karahis* which looked very good. All these things were kept in that museum. I put up paintings of flowering plants in the room next to the museum, these paintings explain the landscape scheme of Chandigarh.

In 1966, I left Delhi and came to my house in Khanpur Garden Colony.

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I felt like the burden of a mountain had been lifted from my head. I kept feeling the pain of sciatica. Doctors advised me that this pain would not go away with medicines. The only way to treat it was to sleep on a *takhtposh* and performing exercises to strengthen the spine. The doctors also instructed me to never bend forward and to always sit straight. Sometime later, the Government of India instituted Dharamvir as the Governor of Punjab and instituted me as the Finance Commissioner of the Capital Project. After working in the framework of the Punjab Government for two or three months, I experienced that no work could be done there with speed. Most of the rules and laws were made in such a way that the government was restricted by them.

The new government of Chandigarh was established in September 1966; this administration is called a Union Territory. The Government of India appointed me as its Chief Commissioner. Now I had to develop the framework of a new government. Initially I believed that a complex framework was not needed for the city, but then I realised that it was important to establish as many departments as the Punjab and Haryana governments had, in Chandigarh as well. The Indian Government decided to pay me the income of 3500 Rupees for this new work. I was previously being paid 4000 Rupees for my work in the Government of India. I decided that the work of this city was so interesting and so many things could be done here that it was wrong to think about the issue of pay. So, I accepted the income that was given to me. Secondly, I do not like interference. Now, there was a question about where I would live. I clearly told the Government that I would live in my farmhouse in Kharar tehsil. They accepted this.

I set up my office in the Estate Office building. I observed that the whole building was in a neglected state, as if it were an animal shed. The first order I gave was to get the building cleaned, sort all the extra files and make free space in the rooms. Then I joined two rooms in a corner and made that my office. I chose two officers to assist me. I appointed Daljit Singh as the Finance Secretary and Damodar Das as the Home Secretary. These two officers were very hard-working, impartial, and intelligent. Then I observed that there were a lot of problems in the work of the Chief Engineer, who was responsible for setting up the whole city.

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I gave the authority of Secretary to both the Chief Engineer and Chief Architect. Kulbir Singh, the Chief Engineer, was a hard-working, intelligent, and honest officer. He greatly increased the speed and efficiency of work with this authority and freedom. First of all, I focused on the art museum. This scheme had not been implemented for many years. There was a huge depression in front of the area of the museum, it used to be the pit of the village at some point. In order to fill this up, I asked the Health Officer to fill it with the garbage of the whole city. This pit filled up with the garbage. Then, soil was spread over it to cover it, saving thousands of Rupees in the process. When the museum building became ready, I called Ratna Fabri from Delhi to design the presentation of its statues and paintings. She placed them with great dexterity. This museum has the largest collection of Gandhara statues and Kangra paintings; it is visited by people from all corners of India and the rest of the world.

I strongly wanted a museum to be established to show the evolution of life. How plants were born, and which stages they passed through to become the flora of today, how they became crops and fruit trees, how they evolved. Similarly, how man reached the stage of evolution seen today. The organisms born crossed the stages of fish, frogs, and lizards, entered the stage of mammals, and then evolved into the species of homo sapiens. I took this scheme to the Government of India myself, and the Ministry of Education and Planning Commission approved it within a day. Here I want to mention that such a scheme had never been passed this fast before. This building was designed by Shiv Datt Sharma, the architect, and the artists Jaswant Singh and Kirpal Singh painted huge paintings for it. Thousands of people visit this museum every day, they learn about the emergence and evolution of life.

The Chief Commissioner is also responsible for listening to appeals about buildings. Many cases would revolve around a person buying a plot but not building anything on it. Such people would get notices of Seizure of Plot. I would give respite to many of them and allow them to present the plan of their house within a month, and begin construction within two months.

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I did not seize anyone's plot. This way, many houses started getting built.

The first thing I did was to get the filth of the slums of the city removed. These slums had spread all over the city and the city had become dirty as a result. Getting the Shastri Market of Sector 22 removed was exceedingly difficult. Those shopkeepers were given alternative locations for their shops, and this way Sector 22 was cleaned.

After this cleanliness drive, I developed a scheme for a rose garden. I got this garden developed within two years. I do not know who named it Zakir Rose Garden after I left Chandigarh. If this garden was named after roses, further attaching a person's name to it was unnecessary. But the custom of sycophancy is very popular in this country. People try to keep the ruler of the time happy in legitimate and illegitimate ways. The name of this garden should remain 'Rose Garden'. I want to share another problem associated with this garden. We thought that a poem about roses should be engraved on the inner door of this garden. We ultimately decided upon a poem written by Bhai Vir Singh about roses, it goes like this:

*Daali naalon tod na saanu,  
Assan hatt mehek di laayi.  
Lakh gaahak je sunghe aake,  
Khaali ikk na jaayi.  
Tu je ikk tod ke lai gyon,  
Ikk joga reh jaasan.  
Oh, vi palak jhalak da mela,  
Roop mehek nass jayi.*

Do not break us from the branch,  
We have set up a perfume shop.  
Lakhs of customers come smell us,  
None leaves without our fragrance.  
If you pluck one and take it,  
You will only savour one.  
It will vanish in the blink of an eye,  
The fragrance will flee.

When this poem was engraved there in Gurmukhi script, some people of the city came to meet me. They said that a Hindi poem should also be engraved here. I asked them to find a suitable Hindi poem which I would get engraved in Devanagri script on the door. I gave them time for one month, but none of them could get me a poem on roses in Hindi.

Another big decision I took to safeguard the environment of the city was to not give permits to factories using coal being set up in the Industrial Area, so that the smoke from the coal would not pollute the air.

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The city of Chandigarh was set up by taking over many villages. Many of the houses of Bijwada village still survived, the blacksmiths worked in those houses with their small machines. All of them were hard-working people and their houses could also have been dismantled if they were compensated for it. I gave all of them industrial plots and loans to set up their factories. This way all the blacksmiths of Bijwada settled down well and their old houses were dismantled. I believe in the principle that when such a scheme has to be implemented, it should be implemented with empathy and not with force.

Then I looked at the habitation of the city and observed that only those people who were rich or had black money could buy plots. Talented people, whether they were artists, writers, scientists, or even government officials, did not have the financial strength to buy plots. First, I made three academies, Literature (Sahitya), Music-Drama (Sangeet-Natak) and Lalit Kala (Art). I added all those people who had written a book into the Sahitya Academy as members. I added dancers into the Music-Drama Academy. I made all renowned artists the members of the Lalit Kala Academy. I gave all these members cheap plots at fixed prices. Similarly, I gave plots to the doctors of P.G.I., the engineers of projects, and architects who had supported the projects. Apart from them, I thought that the army officers who had protected the nation during the war with Pakistan, should also be settled here. I developed a scheme with the help of General Harbakhsh Singh and more than three thousand plots were given to army officers.

I had adopted a way of working in which anyone could meet me between 2 pm and 4 pm. This enabled people to share their difficulties with me. One fact I discovered through this policy was that the work of the department responsible for giving approvals for house plans was being conducted in a very lax manner. The clerks would sit on plans for months and seek bribes for passing them. I found the following solution for this: the Estates Department would



have to present those plans which had not been passed in 15 days and explain why they had not been approved yet.

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This way, the corruption in this department ended and the house plans of the applicants started getting approved with efficiency.

The other area ripe for corruption was that of allotting the industrial plots. I decided on a date and asked for all the applications for the industrial plots to be presented before the deadline. The unemployed engineer graduates and artisans were considered first in the process of allotment. Instead of letting the clerks interfere, I called a meeting with all the applicants to directly hear from them, and announced the decision of who was getting the plot there and then.

After this, I started touring the sectors. I would inspect every sector with the responsible officers and solve the problems of the people. This way, I developed good relations with all the shopkeepers of the city.

With respect to issues of education, I established a separate committee which had all the college Principals as members. Kaushalya Atma Ram, who was the Principal of the Government College for Girls and was administering her college very successfully, gave good advice in this committee. This way, the Director of P.G.I., Santokh Singh and his colleague Dr. Chutani also took great interest. There was no accommodation for the relatives accompanying sick patients to P.G.I. for their treatment. I decided that an inn should be made there. Secondly, there were 60 acres of land adjoining P.G.I., which I gave to the hospital so that this organisation which served patients so dedicatedly, could keep progressing and growing.

Rao Birender Singh was the Chief Minister of Haryana and I had good relations with him. His government lost the election and Chaudhary Bansi Lal became the new Chief Minister of Haryana. He complained to the Government of India that the Chief Commissioner had not come to meet him. The Secretary of the Government of India asked me to go and meet Bansi Lal. When I went to meet him, he formally offered me tea. After meeting him, I felt that he was a very dry man and developing friendship with him would be difficult. Bansi Lal complained to the Government of India that the people of Haryana were not getting industrial plots. I asked Bansi Lal to send me a list of Haryanvis who wanted to buy industrial plots. No list arrived. This proved how baseless and hollow his allegation was.

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In those days, Lachhman Singh Gill became the Chief Minister of Punjab. He came to me with the scheme of developing Mohali. I advised him to not spoil the map of Chandigarh. But he assured me that Mohali would also have sectors like Chandigarh. Town planner N.S. Lamba developed a scheme of industrial plots which placed factories in the north of the Chandigarh-Kharar road. These factories, and especially the starch factory send a lot of smoke towards Chandigarh when it blows from the west.

In those days, I came across the work of a man named Nek Chand Saini. He was a Road Overseer. He had set up a boundary of drums towards the east of the High Court, and he had fixed different types of stones which he found from choes, with great skill in that boundary. I

observed that the man was very dedicated. I gave him funding via the Capital Project and helped him set up the Rock Garden. This Rock Garden is quite famous today.

Chapter 55  
**Living in an Orchard**

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A Captain of the Indian Army bought a plot of land in Chandigarh after retirement. He built a house there to peacefully spend the rest of his life in. Until his house was under construction, he kept busy buying construction material and supervising the workers. Once the house was built and he began living there, he developed a completely different lifestyle. He would feel idle upon seeing the officers and clerks of the Punjab Government leave for the Secretariat and the shopkeepers leave for their shops in the morning. With nothing else to do, he began reading every word of the newspaper The Tribune. Then he would leave for the market to buy fruits and vegetables.

He walked in the parks in the evening. The lack of activity reminded him of the wars with the Japanese in Malaysia he had participated in, he would recall the lives of the prisoners of war in the camps. He would then think about his service in the cantonments of Lucknow and Ambala. Nobody saluted him anymore; salutes intoxicate army officers like wine. He became tired of this quiet life within a few months. He began missing his ancestral village. So, he decided to go to his village and felt that he could work better there. The people of the village elected him as their Sarpanch; he enthusiastically got involved in projects of getting roads and drains built for the people of his village.

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He enjoyed overseeing the cultivation of crops. The greenery of the farms drew him back to his village, away from the tasteless life of Chandigarh.

When I read the novel Candide by the French novelist Voltaire, I felt like his experience drew a parallel with this Punjabi Captain's experience. Candide, a simple young man, lived in a palace in Westphalia with the Baron. This man fell in love with the Baron's daughter named Cunégonde. One evening, when Candide and Cunégonde left the dinner table, they went behind a curtain. Cunégonde dropped her handkerchief on the ground, which Candide picked up. The girl innocently held his hand. The man lovingly and softly kissed her hand. Their lips met, eyes shone, knees trembled, and hands started moving over each other. Baron could see what was happening behind the curtain. He kicked Candide's bottom and threw him out of the palace.

Bulgarians attacked this fort a few days after this incident. These Bulgarians have a fearsome reputation in Eastern Europe like the Pathans have in India. The Bulgarian soldiers raped Cunégonde. Their Captain rescued her later. When she had left with the Captain, and their ship was in the middle of the ocean, Black pirates attacked the ship and captured it. Now, Cunégonde was again captured, this time by the Captain of the Blacks. Candide had also been captured when the Bulgarians attacked. He was then passed along lines of Bulgarian soldiers for them to successively flog him. He later ran off to Spain where he was then beaten with a cane.

Finally, Candide, Cunégonde and two of their friends from the palace of Westphalia, the philosopher, Pangloss and Priest Martin, reached Constantinople. They bought some land

there for farming. One day, they went to meet their Turk neighbour, and found the old Turk sitting under the shade of orange trees. He welcomed them and offered them orange preserve and pistachios. There had been a rumour in the area about two Ministers and a Mufti who had been throttled to death and many of their companions had been crucified. They asked the old Turk about the name of the Mufti who had been killed.

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That old man said, "I do not know anything. I do not know the name of any Minister or Mufti. I have no information about the incident you are talking about. I believe that the people who interfere in the administration of the state are mercilessly killed, and this is what should be done to them. I never ask anything about the happenings in Constantinople. I am satisfied by sending the produce of my orchard to the market. I only have 20 acres of land. I farm it with the help of my children. This lifestyle keeps me away from the three evils — boredom, vice and poverty." Candide and his companions realised that the lifestyle chosen by the old Turk was better than that of the six Emperors they had had the honour of sharing meals with. Candide and Martin took charge of hoeing, Pangloss decided to help with irrigation and Cunégonde took on the task of cooking for all of them.

Every government employee starts thinking of his post-retirement life when he turns fifty. Many feel that retirement means doing nothing.

Once they lose the job that they are used to doing every day, their lives become aimless. This pain of losing their powers is also difficult to cope with. Their condition is like that cyclist who suddenly realises that both the tyres of his bicycle are punctured. They keep pondering over personal problems and their life becomes like hell. Some plan to live in orchards and plant trees after retirement. It takes about ten years for an orchard to flourish, and so their next generation enjoys the fruit of their labour.

When I was serving as an Advisor with the Planning Commission of India in 1964, I thought that I needed to decide where I would live after retirement. I had bought a plot in the Hauz Khas colony of Delhi. I had passed through this area multiple times on horseback in 1947. This place, with its magnificent tombs of Tughlaq Emperors, appeared ideal for me to settle down in. However, soon, many houses were built here, removing the peace of this area. The pensioners would sit in the verandas of their houses and carefully read newspapers. This was a depressing scene.

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Their conversations generally revolved around finding rich foreigners as tenants for their ground floor rooms so that they could live comfortably. Seeing this, I decided that neither Hauz Khas nor any other colony was good enough for me to live in.

I had been planting an orchard on my land in the Garden Colony of Khanpur village since 1954. This was eight miles away from Chandigarh. This is a beautiful place, the Shivalik Hills lie towards its north. I got one tube-well installed in it to solve the problems of irrigation in the farms. Its water tasted sweet, but it was not good for washing clothes or hair. It had high metallic content. One of my friends, a chemist, shared a method of softening this water with

me, solving my last problem with respect to living here. On the other hand, my savings were getting depleted because of the falling value of the Rupee. I decided to take 50,000 Rupees out of my Provident Fund and started building a house in the orchard with it.

The main design of the house kept in mind one being able to see the orchards and the hills from within. Our architect, Shri B.P. Mathur, installed huge glass windows on both the sides while designing the house. There was ample space for books in all rooms, large shelves were fixed in the walls. I had many precious books which I wanted to save from rain and termite attacks. I could not agree with the strange views of Mrs. Norah Richard that one should live in kutcha houses. The kutcha walls start showing cracks within a year or two, and geckoes and mice fester in timber roofs. As a result, the timber frame of the roof needs to be replaced every three years. In reality, this way of living is an expensive luxury. The wooden doors and windows in the kutcha walls get infested with termite. Books also do not stay safe in this condition. This explains why enlightenment knowledge could not flourish in warm countries as much as it did in colder countries. Keeping all these things in mind, I decided to get a pucca house with lintel built.

Initially, I had hoped that the orchard would give me good financial returns. So, I planted guavas, mangoes, and oranges in it. If all the expenses of the orchard are calculated: diesel, labour, fertiliser, electricity, and wear and tear of the machinery, then orchards prove to not yield any profits. The powerful dust-storms of May and June hinder the development of mangoes.

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When the first crop of mangoes blossomed in the orchard, it was completely destroyed by dust-storms. In order to protect this mango plantation from dust-storms, I decided to plant a wall of eucalyptus trees around it. These trees grew into a dense green wall within six years and began deflecting the winds of the dust-storms away from the mango trees. When the green crowns of the Eucalyptus trees sway in the wind, they look very beautiful. I had never predicted that the eucalyptus trees would grow so tall so quickly, and even obstruct our view of the hills.

I also decided to plant some flowering trees in my orchard so that my desire for colourful surroundings would be satisfied. My friend B.P. Paul gave me a plant of *Bauhinia × blakeana* orchid which he had brought from Hong Kong. No other species of orchid can compete with this variety. Unlike other species of orchid, this variety does not shed its leaves and it remains evergreen throughout the year. It blossoms into deep-red flowers in November. It remains covered with flowers during the year. Its flowers invite birds and honeybees. Honeybees often build beehives on this tree, so they are not only a source of honey but are also a source of danger to visitors.

I had planted Java cassia trees in the south of the orchard. Flowers blossomed on them for the first time in May 1971. These pink flowers pleased my eyes. Apart from the flowers, the cut branches of this plant also serve as good firewood. I also planted lemons, plums, and apricots. Apricot plants cannot grow in moist environments, so they dried up, but the plums flourished in the orchard. I really like the flowering plant *Jasminum pubescens* or the *dela*. It bears beautiful white flowers during winter. This jasmine looks beautiful on moonlit nights. The Mary Palmer Bougainvillea planted in the south of my orchard blesses me with colours

for many months. Its flowers look beautiful; they are especially pleasing in April and October. They do not need any service in the form of water or manure. They can be pruned easily and offer us firewood during the months of September and February.

I shifted into my home in the orchard on 29 June 1966. I had never felt so comfortable before. I got rid of the mental burden of meeting constantly for raising the productivity of crops during the difficult times of Indian agriculture.

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I could see the beauty of stars after so many years. One cannot see the stars in the cities because of streetlights. Many stars can be seen in the villages during dark nights, the path of constellations shine like cool, pleasant light. Living in the orchard is close to nature. I wake up when the sun rises and return home to watch it set. For the first time in my life, I observed the gradual change in the direction of the rising sun with the shifting of the seasons. It shifts to the south in winters and north in summers.

If one decides to live in a farm, a dog must be kept to watch the farm at night. The dog has been man's companion for the last thirty thousand years. During the Metal Age, humans used to search for animals to kill and eat them. Today, a few varieties of dogs are popular in the cities, they are named as per their breeds. However, only a strong breed can survive in the villages because it needs to compete with the local street dogs. Pure-bred Alsatians or mixed Alsatians are not difficult to find in Punjab today. The manager of the orchard, Sampooran Singh, brought a strong mixed-breed dog named 'Pappu' for me. We did not know its exact breed. Pappu's body was black on top, there were yellow patches around its eyes, and its legs and lower body were brown in colour.

Pappu eats different things. He eats frogs in the monsoons. Even though he had this 'French' taste for frogs, he also did not mind eating house lizards. Breeding season occurs during June, leading to an increase in the number of sparrows chirping in the houses and orange trees. In those days, I saw Pappu jumping and eating sparrows.

Pappu had enmity with his own species. One day, while I was chopping off diseased mango florets from the mango tree, a Deputy Director of the Agriculture Department came to meet me. His daughter, educated in an English-medium school, was with him. He had come to enquire whether we had received the hybrid seeds of Mexican wheat or not. Sampooran Singh told them that the seeds had been distributed among the Block Committee members, and nobody else was given even one seed. I asked the Deputy Director to join me in pruning the mango branches. In the meantime, his daughter who had ignorantly brought her dog along, left this small furry dog on the ground.

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This dog started wagging its tail and excitedly jumping around. I do not know where Pappu came from. It pounced on this poor dog with lightning speed. It held the small dog by its neck and started walking away like a cat carrying a mouse. We threw stones at Pappu to no avail. Then, we hit him with sticks and rescued the small dog. We took the injured dog to a veterinary hospital, but it died within two hours. All of us were saddened by the demise of this small dog.

Pappu had complete knowledge of the boundaries of the orchard. He ruled over this area and did not allow anyone to cross. He never let any animals to come close, but he hated his own species the most. If any other dog would enter his kingdom, he would not rest until he had shooed it away. He bit even the bigger dogs with great hatred, but the smaller ones were completely torn apart.

When he would hear the tatiri bird, he would start running after it but would not catch it. I could also hear the cries of the tatiri for hours. Pappu had strong enmity with wild cats. These cats would come to the orchard to steal hens and eat mice at night.

Pappu never spared small dogs. He was not even scared of big dogs. One day, he pounced on a large Alsatian, double his size belonging to our neighbours. He threw that dog down. After that, this Alsatian would get out of Pappu's way, his tail between his legs. All these victories gave Pappu the confidence to deal with street dogs. Sampooran Singh's house was half a mile away from our place and Pappu would visit them every day. He would meet many groups of street-dogs on his way. It should be mentioned here, that for many years, he kept the love between Sampooran Singh's family and ours alive. He would visit Sampooran Singh's house every evening. He stopped only when Sampooran Singh died in a tractor accident. Once, five street dogs surrounded him. He fought very bravely but they bit off a piece of his skin. Pappu did not let us apply medicine on it. He would hide in a corner of a room full of wheat-straw, to save his wound from flies.

The wound was not healing. We decided to put him to sleep to end his agony. We called a veterinary doctor to inject poison in him.

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The doctor tried to inject it in Pappu's shoulder, but he ran away with the injection. Then, we called a gunman to shoot Pappu. He hid himself during the day and could not be found. When the gunman got tired of waiting, he returned to his home. The next day, we mixed Aldrin in his milk. This also did not affect Pappu at all. Now, we believed that some black magic was helping him live. We named the dog 'Rasputin' and did not try to kill him again. His wounds healed in a month; he was again ready to fight with any dog crossing his way.

There are many anxieties associated with managing an orchard. The biggest problem for me was the sound of owls during September 1966-December 1966. Their hooting is so horrible that if you hear it in the middle of the night, you cannot sleep for the rest of the night. Owls are considered farmers' friends because they eat mice during the night. However, I was ready to bear the damage done by the mice instead of listening to the funereal hooting of owls. I got a scarecrow made on the roof to scare them away. I painted an earthen pot white and drew a human face with a long moustache on it. An old bedsheet was hung below this for it to sway with the wind. This trick worked for a few months. However, soon, the owl understood this and began sitting on it. I asked my son Jatinder to finish off this stubborn owl. One morning, he shot this owl; it got injured but then vanished into the sugarcane farm. The next morning, we saw it in the carrot field. Its feathers had been riddled with bullet-holes. It could hop but could not fly. Two boys chased it. It enlarged its huge terrifying eyes and its ears stood on end, and it attacked them. One of them hit it with an iron chain and it died. In those days, a

taxidermist from Ambala had come to meet me. I gave him this dead owl. He filled it up and sold it to the Zoology Department in a college in Chandigarh.

I observed that when the maize ripened, the street-dog population increased. They would eat corn cobs and cry horribly. The month of September is also like spring. I noticed that the bitches were in heat then. Hordes of dogs would roam in the fields. The crows would eat corn and parrots would pick on guavas during the day.

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Urban people can never understand what the orchard contractors living with their children and families need to do to save their fruits. They make noises like 'hoye, hoye' the whole morning, and burst firecrackers in the evening. The city-folk only see baskets decorated with fruit in the shops. What can they know about the hard work that goes into ferrying this produce to the market?

Till now, I have mentioned the sounds I could hear at night in the orchard. Now, I will talk about the morning sounds. The siren of Panipat Woollen Mills goes off early in the morning. Loudspeakers blare at day and night for one festival or another. This horrible gift of science has destroyed the peace and quiet of Indian villages. Loudspeakers are not used so carelessly in any other country. This has become a disgrace.

The sweet sounds of bells tied to animals' necks could be heard in the mornings of 1965. Now, after the changes brought about by the Green Revolution in the field of agriculture, this sound cannot be heard anymore. Now the harsh sound of trolleys and humming of tractors can be heard throughout the night from the months of September to November and then in June. Threshers are used for winnowing day and night in the months of May and June. Even though these machines have reduced the amount of hard work needed and increased the production, they have created new types of noise in the environment at the same time.

Bird watching is one of the pleasures of living in an orchard. The purple sunbird sucks nectar from the orchids in the month of April. Telephone cables are decorated like jewellery by the Indian woodpecker, Indian blue jay, and green sparrows. This is the woodpecker's breeding season. Some of them go completely mad. One woodpecker kept on pecking at my windowpane for ten days. I would shoo it away, but it would return. I thought that there was no other way out of this situation other than shooting it, but it is very unpleasant to shoot a bird in the morning because the rest of the day is also spoiled by the shooting.

I have described some small problems which one encounters. Now I will tell you about the pleasures of living in an orchard. Bathing in the water of a tube-well is the greatest pleasure. I got a wall built around the tube-well as an enclosure and got an iron gate fixed in it.

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I had blue tiles fixed inside, and rough tiles fixed in the bathing area so that one does not slip while bathing. Half of the roof was constructed with iron sheets and the other half was left open. The pleasure one gets upon bathing under the open sky and in flowing water cannot be achieved by any other means. Bathing in a tub is like bathing in dirty water. However, here, the body gets cleaned, the dirty water flows into the fields, and acts as manure for the crops.



Another feature of the water of the tube-well is its correct temperature. It is cold in the summers and warm in the winters. Whenever I go to Delhi or abroad, I miss bathing with tube-well water the most.

Another pleasure of the orchard is being able to pluck fresh oranges and savouring them. They taste completely different. An orange plucked just an hour earlier is less delicious. We get a lot of mangoes in July. The chausa summer bahisht is my favourite variety from among the grafted varieties of mangoes. This tastes like heavenly fruit. No other fruit can compete with it in taste. Dussheri, banarsi, langda, rataul and Lucknow safeda are some other good varieties. They drip with thin juice and are very tasty. I finish entire basketfuls of mangoes. I drink a glass of cold milk to rid myself of the heat and feel comforted and pleasant. I consider eating mangoes as the best pleasure of rural life.

Roses are in full bloom in March when spring is at its peak. Hedges are full of fragrant white wisteria, but the flowers of oranges and maltas have a sweeter fragrance than all other flowers. My orchard is a symbol of my love for nature, it expresses my outlook towards life. So, I performed many experiments to solve problems with respect to agriculture and horticulture in the country. The biggest benefit of the orchard is that it provided me a peaceful atmosphere to study Indian art and agriculture. I have enjoyed the beauty of the moon and the stars here and savoured the changing colours of the world of plants as well. This has kept me busy.

Chapter 56  
**The History of a Road**

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Punjab was divided in 1947; this Partition led to a lot of destruction. Lakhs of refugees came from Pakistan. A scheme for their settlement was developed and the work of land allotment was conducted from the building of Islamia College, Jalandhar. More than 7000 Patwaris and other officials worked there. The Government of Punjab made me the Director General of the resettlement scheme in 1948. We established the new foundation of Punjab under this scheme. At this time, there was not even a single tube-well in the whole of Punjab, and only a few people owned tractors. Three years before this, I had the opportunity to visit America. I went to Canada's Quebec city where I participated in the second World Conference of the Food and Agriculture Organisation. This is a French-speaking area. It felt like we had gone to some province of France. When this conference finished, I and my companions, Sardar Habibullah, Sardar Ujjal Singh, and Sir Vijay Raghavachari thought that since we had come that far, we should study the schemes of the Tennessee Valley Authority. We came to Washington from Quebec and the High Commissioner of India, Sir Giriya Shankar Bajpai, arranged for our tour of T.V.A.

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All four of us reached the headquarters of T.V.A. at Knoxville. There is a large black population in Tennessee state, other than the white population. The black girls worked as waitresses in the hotel where we stayed. Some white girls also worked as waitresses, other than the black ones. There was a lot of hatred between the whites and blacks in the city. Toilets and buses were distinctly marked for the blacks or the whites. We noticed that our companion Sir Vijay Raghavachari, who was a Madrasi Brahmin, preferred the white waitresses over the black ones. The Mercedes Benz car of Goering had come to the town of Knoxville in those days. Thousands of Americans used to come to see that car. When our group went to see this car, we noticed that all the white people started staring at Sardar Ujjal Singh who was wearing a turban and had fixed his beard very neatly with Fixo. On the other side, Sir Vijay Raghavachari's Benarasi turban was also getting a lot of attention from the whites. The Americans forgot about Goering's car and gathered around these two men. We escaped the crowd with great difficulty.

The next day, we visited the farms. There was a farm of 350 acres where an American white man was farming with the help of his 15-year-old son. This was possible with the help of tractors. I thought that our Indian farmers could not keep big tractors, but this was an invention which could improve farming to a great extent if popularised. This is the invention of the electric motor, available from half horsepower to 5 horsepower; American farmers usually used this. They extracted ground water for the animals and chopped animal feed with the help of this motor. Some had used it in their personal flour mills.

In those days, I was responsible for the development of agriculture. We developed a simple plan to popularise electric tube-wells. There was shortage of electricity in Punjab at that

time, so we could not encourage its use to a large extent. Hence, we selected those villages where the migrants had been allotted lands near cities and towns.

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Sardar Lal Singh was the Director of Agriculture of Punjab. In my experience, there has been no better Director of Agriculture in the whole of India than Lal Singh. Lal Singh bought many boring rings. We decided that the refugees who owned more than 10 acres of land would be given tube-wells. We made lists of such farmers and gave them loans. After that, I gave the list to Lal Singh and told him to dig tube-wells for those farmers as early as possible. The Electricity Department was asked to provide electricity for these tube-wells. A lot of development took place in these villages near the cities of Punjab. Here, I would like to mention that if we had not thought about this scheme during the American trip, if we had not thought that the usage of electric tube-wells is important for developing agriculture, then this scheme would not have taken off for many years.

Lal Singh developed the Garden Colony scheme in those days. After Partition, all the malta orchards had been left in Lyallpur, Montgomery and Sargodha and there were no such orchards in our Punjab, which is why this scheme was needed. 10,000 acres of land was reserved for orchards in this scheme. It was decided to have two Garden Colonies in each district. The consolidation of these villages was done before the other areas, and loans were distributed for the tube-wells. I played a major role in implementing this scheme. I had read about the Garden Colonies of Israel in Dr. Mulk Raj Anand's magazine Marg. We thought that Punjab not only needed more fruit cultivation, but the lifestyle of people also needed to change.

I took an allotment of 15 acres of land in Khanpur village, 1 km away from Kharar town. This area came under the Garden Colony scheme. At that time, the Chandigarh scheme was also in the news. I thought that if I could combine urban life with the tranquillity of the farms, then life would be better in the Garden Colony than in the city of Chandigarh. The people of this colony elected me as their President, and I kept on helping them in various matters.

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I felt that most of the allottees of this colony were graduates in agriculture and were very decent people. Out of them, I appreciate Chaudhary Hari Singh and Sardar Mohan Singh the most. Both of them had shifted from Lyallpur and had motivated me to settle down there.

Water management is most important for quality farming. We arranged for a boring ring from the Department of Agriculture and dug the land till a depth of 450 ft but could not get a good quantity of water. The total expenditure of this tube-well was around 5000 Rupees, which was paid by selling old mango trees. Then, we thought of digging tube-wells in our own fields. There was an old retired Overseer, Shri Munni Lal, who could help us find water. He lived in village Mundi Kharar. We called him to help us. He came to help with my farm as well. He used a brass spinning-top with a thread and found water with it. He would feel a jerk in his arm from the thread attached to the top wherever there was water beneath the land. All of us found water with the help of this man and we installed one tube-well each in our fields.

Only then did we experiment with common farming. Sampooran Singh was the Manager of the Garden Colony, he was an ex-Captain in the Indian National Army. He used to drive a tractor and keep the accounts of the farmers as a collective. We had a very bitter experience with common farming because the farmers would get their land ploughed by the tractor but would refuse to pay for it. This experiment failed and the tractor was eventually sold off.

Sampooran Singh used to get a salary of Rs. 50 per month from the Garden Colony, and he owned 6-7 acres of his own land which he used to farm on. At that time, there was no electricity in Khanpur. Mohan Singh, Hari Singh, and I bought a diesel-engine. This engine worked for the tube-wells of our farms. In 1955, I got transferred from Chandigarh to Delhi as the Vice-President of I.C.A.R. I had to now think of some alternative arrangement for the farm. At that time, Sampooran Singh needed to rent more land, so he said, "I'll do your work and plant an orchard." I bought him a couple of oxen.

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He used to get the income of all the crops, but I would pay for all the expenditure. Sampooran Singh benefitted a lot from this arrangement. I used to send him good quality plants of malta and mangoes from Saharanpur, which he used to then plant and grow. In 1964, I was the Advisor to the Planning Commission. At that time, I felt that because of the spread of coins in the country, the value of the Rupee would fall. I took Rs. 50,000 from my Provident Fund and decided to build my house in the orchard with it. Shri Bhanu Mathur, the architect of Chandigarh, was a dear friend of mine. I had gone to Geneva to participate in an international conference there. As I stayed in Hotel Rhone, I could see the view of Lake Geneva from the windows of my room. I told Mr. Mathur to design a house where the orchard could be seen from each room. Generally speaking, I am in love with nature. Not only do I love colourful flowers and plants, I also love the moon and stars. The rising sun in the morning is clearly visible from my room, and so is the moon at night.

The house was built but there was no road to reach it. Baldev Kapoor, the BDO here, used to formerly work in the Land Consolidation Scheme. He arranged for an unmetalled road from my house to the town. This road would end before the market of Kharar, because the farms of Sardar Hazara Singh Landranwale were in its way. He had set up a barbed-wire and blocked the way. I asked Hazara Singh why he was not opening the way. He had some enmities with the Sainis of Kharar, and he mostly spoke in Hindustani. He bad-mouthed the Sainis and said that he would not let them cross. When I returned to Delhi, I wrote him a letter saying that we should not become obstructions in the path of social welfare because we do not know how long we will live. Hazara Singh accepted my advice and opened the way. He died three months after this incident.

Nobody could pass through this colony in the monsoon months. It was muddy everywhere. Sardar Partap Singh Kairon was the Chief Minister of Punjab, and he was in deep trouble. He met me in Delhi and said,

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“Come back to Punjab and take charge as Chief Secretary.” I told him that even if I returned to Punjab, I wanted to live in my farm and not in Chandigarh. He agreed and told his Minister of the Public Works Department, Sardar Niranjana Singh Talib to immediately convert that unmetalled road into a metalled one. It was important to cover this road with soil before making it a metalled one. Sardar Samund Singh, the Headmaster of Khalsa High School, and Master Mohan Singh helped a lot in this work. I had helped them establish an art gallery and a library at one point of time. A camp for schoolboys was arranged, and the boys covered this path with soil. We gave free land from the Garden Colony for this road whereas the farmers of Kharar took proper compensation for this road.

The conflicts of Sardar Partap Singh Kairon had become complicated. I felt that I could not help him in a significant way. Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri and Shri Gulzari Lal Nanda were his special enemies. In those days, such a defamatory political environment developed that it was difficult for Kairon to live.

During those days, there was severe shortage of grains in the entire country. One day, I met Shri T.T. Krishnamachari at the Yojana Bhavan in New Delhi, and he asked me, “What are you doing here? This is like a cow shed where the old and infirm cows are kept. You are a capable person. Take charge of the scheme of agriculture as a Director General.” Sir Swaran Singh was the Minister for Agriculture at that time. He was my classmate and I used to admire his wisdom. I implemented the scheme of progressive farming all over the country with great diligence. I toured all states via aeroplanes, motorcars, and jeeps. This work was a huge mental burden for me, and I developed sciatica pain as a result. I took leave for three months. I got transferred to Punjab because of this. I started living in my new house in June 1966. After returning from Delhi, I felt as if thousands of weights had been removed from my shoulders. I saw the moon and stars after many years. One rarely sees the moon and stars in cities because of the dust and streetlights. Bathing in the water of the tube-well was the most pleasurable activity for me.

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I was appointed as the Commissioner of the Capital Project with the Government of Punjab. I thought that a garden of roses should be planted in Chandigarh. Sardar Sampooran Singh was the Finance Secretary of Punjab. When I asked him about this idea, he told me they had no funds. In September, Chandigarh became a U.T. and I was appointed as its Chief Commissioner. I established a new system in the U.T. in a way that work came to be performed quickly and efficiently. I gave the powers of a Secretary to the Chief Engineer and the Head Architect. Sardar Kulbir Singh was the Chief Engineer and he actively implemented the schemes. I discussed the issue of the garden of roses with him, and by that time, Sardar Daljit Singh had become the Finance Secretary. He was a large-hearted man. He told me that the garden could be made. I had developed a large collection of rose varieties at the Pusa research institute in Delhi. We started the garden by bringing plants from there. Mr. Dharamvir, the Governor of Punjab, was a good friend of mine. I got him to inaugurate this garden because he was also a flower-lover. One day, I met Sampooran Singh again; he had retired by then. I asked

him, "Where have you come from?" He said, "I am coming from a walk in the rose garden." "Perhaps, you should not enjoy the garden," I replied.

One day, the people of Badhedi, Peer Sohana and other villages came to meet me and said that they also wanted to be connected with the road. This was why they were also ready to develop a link road and contribute labour for the unmetalled extension. Raja Narinder Singh was a Minister in the Akali Government. I called him and made him meet these people. Raja Narinder Singh immediately ordered that the road should be extended. I still suffered from pain because of sciatica. I began sleeping on a hard bed. Every morning, I would supervise the work of the Badhedi villagers with respect to the link road, and then reach Chandigarh to take diathermy treatment from Dr. Pritam Singh. Then, I would go to the Secretariat and work from a sofa. Patients of sciatica are not allowed to bend their backs. That is why I had to adopt the habit of working on a sofa. Slowly, I started feeling better.

The construction of the road began. There was a sharp turn in the field of Sardar Harnam Singh which posed great difficulty for the people building the road. I suggested to Harnam Singh to leave more way for the road by giving up a part of his land and connect the slanting path with the other end of the road. He accepted my advice, and this is how the road was straightened.

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I saw that the road brought a revolution in the life of Khanpur and to six-seven other villages. The boys and girls of these villages started studying in the schools of Kharar. Many people who owned buffaloes started selling their milk in Chandigarh. The custom of sowing vegetables began among people, which further developed agriculture. Many youths took up jobs in Chandigarh.

Here, I would like to mention that when this road was built, a Congress leader started saying that this road had been made for only one person. He was defaming me because he was suspicious that I would contest elections. One day, I met him and told him, "You should take a chair and sit on the berm of the road. Keep a notebook in your hand and record how many cyclists, motorcyclists and pedestrians use this road. This is how you will realise that this road is benefitting thousands of people." This road did not only lead to the progress of the villages, it also improved the economic status of the town of Kharar. Kharar was a rotten town full of dilapidated shops. When the wheat, rice and vegetables from these villages began coming to the market of Kharar, the people of Kharar benefitted as well. Before the Green Revolution, 20-25 maunds of grains and piles of jaggery were the only visible items in this market. But now, due to the Green Revolution, so much grain came to be produced here that a grain market had to be set up.

When the road became actively used, some of Kharar's residents began building their houses around it. One of these people named Bhuro, who had a tea shop in the market, made me think that he would trash the whole place. Later, I was surprised to see that he had built a beautiful house and planted so many flowers in front of it. He wrote Randhawa Road on the wall of his house, and this is how the road came to be named because the name became popular. Sardar Shamsheer Singh Josh was an MLA from the Communist Party, he represented Kharar. He was popular and energetic. He established a college in Bhango Majra through his own will

and initiative. He told the Municipal Committee that the road had been made through the leadership of M.S. Randhawa who had served Punjab for a long time, and that is why this road should be named after him.

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The Municipal Committee accepted this suggestion and a board saying 'Randhawa Road' was installed on the road. This board gave me the facility of enabling people from far away cities to easily locate my house.

Here I want to share another incident which has contributed to the development of Punjab. Sardar Lachhman Singh Gill defeated Gurnam Singh Judge and became the Chief Minister of Punjab. I had known him from my time in Delhi. I saw that he was a very brave man, the only contractor who could scare the PWD officers and get his bills approved without giving any bribe. Lachhman Singh Gill and Diwan Singh Maftoon were my special admirers. After becoming the Chief Minister, Lachhman Singh Gill came to meet me. He said, "Randhawa Sahib, Ministries come and go. Please tell me about a scheme which will endear me for posterity." I replied, "Punjab has many villages which remain isolated from civilisation because of one to two mile-long unmetalled roads. The children of such areas are unable to access good education, and neither can the villagers comfortably go to the grain market to sell their crops. You should leave all other work aside, use your finances on link roads and see the results." I also told him that if he wanted to see the results of link roads, then he should observe the changes in the villages near Randhawa Road. Since Lachhman Singh Gill was a villager, he was aware of these problems, he understood me and implemented this scheme in Jagraon, which was his own constituency. This began changing the map of the villages. As a result, all the villagers of Punjab demanded that their link roads should also be made metalled roads. Looking at this work, Chaudhary Bansi Lal, the Chief Minister of Haryana, implemented this scheme in his state on a large scale. When the Akalis lost the elections and the Congress got victory, then Giani Zail Singh also enlarged the scope of this scheme. So, the secret of the development of Punjab does not only lie in new crops, it can also be found in its link roads. Now, you will be well-aware that this road called Randhawa Road, did not only benefit a few villages, it benefitted the whole of Punjab.

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Other than making link roads, I also advised Lachhman Singh Gill to write in Gurmukhi on buses and milestones so that the language of the Punjabi suba should be clear to the people. He immediately passed an order and the names of cities began being written in Gurmukhi on milestones; the names of buses of Punjab Roadways also came to be written in Gurmukhi.

Chapter 57  
**Our Experience of Farming**  
 (1966-1984)

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Because I was very engrossed in my official work, I could not give much attention to the orchard and farming. So, I handed over this work to my wife, Shrimati Iqbal Kaur. The following account has been written by her. Many people believe that farming is a money-minting exercise. In our experience, farming only constitutes hard work and labour, and once you take out all expenses, only a little profit remains. The people who show a lot of profit out of farming are black marketeers. Their money is black money, no work happens on their land and they show profits of 2000-3000 Rupees per acre. If farming yielded such results in reality, there would have been no poverty in Punjab. Only those people find success in farming who get money from abroad. Those who depend on agriculture alone, continue to tie poor headscarves (parna) and wear dirty shirts. I understood this not only from my farm, but also came to this conclusion from the accounts of the farm income of Punjab Agriculture University (PAU). No farm yielded profits of more than 200-300 Rupees per acre. The main reason for this is that the new techniques of farming are more expensive than older methods. If you earn 25,000 Rupees, 12,000 is spent on labourers, paying the servants, and offering them food. Even on 15-16-acre farms, fertilisers of 5000 Rupees are used. Apart from this, more than 1000 Rupees of electricity bills,

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2000 Rupees for diesel, 500-600 Rupees on pesticides, and large-scale expenses for repairing the wear and tear of machines which farmers are not even aware of. A tractor bought for 80,000 Rupees needs at least 10,000 Rupees on repairing wear and tear. Despite all these expenses, it must be acknowledged that the farming of today is more productive than the former methods, and this is saving the nation from starvation and poverty. If I am asked about which class can be called a 'hero' after independence, I would say that Punjab's Sikh farmers deserve this title. They worked hard for the Green Revolution and saved the nation from starvation and poverty. The following account has been written by Iqbal Kaur. Read this carefully:

"In reality, I entered the field of agriculture in my later age. My husband was an I.C.S. officer, and like other officers, we would be transferred from place to place. There was no question of farming in any posting. Finally, in 1968, my husband was transferred from Delhi to Chandigarh, and he was appointed as the Chief Commissioner of the Union Territory. Instead of living in Chandigarh, we decided to reside in our 15-acre farm which was 8 miles away from Chandigarh. This farm is part of the Khanpur Garden Colony. Under the Garden Colony scheme, the orchard-growers from Pakistan were allotted land here in exchange for the land they had lost in Pakistan. This way, in exchange for our 18-acre canal-fed land in Montgomery district, we were allotted 15 acres of unirrigated land here. This was not a favour. This was planned only so that these people could learn from each other's special experiences of farming.



When we were in Delhi, INA's Sardar Sampooran Singh took responsibility for caring for our land. He was a clerk in the Garden Colony, and he also had 6 acres of land of his own. We brought good quality plants of mangoes and guavas from a nursery in Saharanpur which he planted on our land. We asked him to cultivate crops on that unused land, and to take the income from the cultivation for himself. We also got one tube-well installed and started paying the bills for electricity and fertilisers. We also bought him a couple of oxen. This way, because he was helped properly, he took care of our garden well. He could save a lot of money this way and in 1967, when he separated from us, he could build a house of his own.

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When we were still in Delhi, we had gotten our house constructed in the orchard in 1964. We would come here every year and stay in it for a few weeks. Whenever we would come, we would plant orange, guava, and mango plants. This way, some acres of land came under the cultivation of these fruit-trees. Then we felt that it would not be difficult for us to live there. In reality, this would be a new experience for us. My husband is from a village, and we had never ended our relationship with the village. This was why we desired to see new crops and fruit on our little bit of land in every season. I was not unfamiliar with farms and farming. My father, the late Dr. Harbhajan Singh was a famous ophthalmologist, he had a farm near Gojran. Our whole family and my grandmother would take great interest in this garden. I knew which crops were sown there and when they were grown. Maltas, oranges and pomelos grew in our farm, and crops were also sown in it, just like we do in our farm here.

The farming I am doing now is different from our farming in Pakistan. The first thing is that I would take interest in farming only from afar, but here, I take responsibility for all the work of the farm and orchard. Secondly, now I am aware of using chemical fertilisers, which I did not know about before. There are also other things I am now familiar with, like the tube-well and its electric motor, which needs to be adjusted as per the level of the water table. I have also come to know about pesticides which need to be sprayed over the crops every year at a specific time. I began trusting chemical fertilisers and pesticides very soon. One can instantly gauge the difference between using them and not using them. There is another example of the new technique of farming, putting gypsum in the alkaline soil to correct the PH level. Nobody knew about this method before. We had one acre of land which was very alkaline, no crop would grow on it. We have corrected this with gypsum. We have made a cemented pool (chubaccha) at the tube-well, the water goes into the fields from here. I wash clothes with the water of the tube-well.

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We have covered this pool; it also has a door which can be shut from within. The family members can bathe here without being seen. The other farmers should also do this. This is especially comfortable for women.

The tube-well does not only give us comforts, it also causes problems. In summer, when the water table recedes, the tube-well functions with difficulty. Because the air leaks into it, it draws water after 15 minutes. Electricians have to be called to look at the belt, motor, and diesel

engine of the tube-well quite often; they take a lot of money for small repairs. The motors often short-circuit, and 300 Rupees are spent on repairing the wiring.

After many years of experience, I have also come to know that the technology of today cannot control climatic conditions. As an example, mangoes and guavas grow very well in our area, but it is difficult to grow lemon plants here. If there is too much rain, the produce is of bad quality. One fruit grows well in one year, and another fruit in another year. One year, winter lasted a long time, and it was followed by dust-storms, and then rains. Due to this, the orange trees bore very few fruit. Apart from this, pests and diseases often attack the orange trees. One has to spray pesticides on them to protect them from these diseases. The bark-eating worm also attacks them. The tree's life lies in its bark, and if worms eat this, the tree dies. I came to know this after many years. Now we put flit or kerosene in the holes in trees where these worms hide. Despite this, many orange trees died, and we had to dig them out. We expected some trees which bore good fruit to give us good produce, but I came to know that they also started drying up from the top after 5-6 years.

Parrots greatly damage the orchard. We planted some pear trees. They bore fruit after 10 years, but the parrots ate all the fruit. It is not possible to take the mangoes and guavas to the market, so we give them to a contractor. They and their children keep shooing away the parrots by shouting 'ho, ho' day and night.

When Sampooran Singh left our orchard and went to his farm, we also gave our couple of oxen to him.

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Now we had nothing to cultivate crops with. We took the aid of our neighbours who had their own tractors, to plough our land. We came to know that they would be engaged in their own work when we needed the tractors, and we were unable to plough our land at the right time. Then in 1968, we sent an application to the Chief Minister of that time, Sardar Gurnam Singh, he gave us a permit to buy a tractor. My husband bought a Zetor tractor, a trolley, implements, a seed-drill, a harvesting machine etc., for 25,000 Rupees. There is no doubt in the fact that it is not profitable to use a tractor to cultivate crops in a small farm, but we had no other option. No aspect of farming can be conducted well without a tractor.

I interact with the workers the most. We have three workers who work all year. One drives the tractor and sows the seeds, he does not only drive the tractor on untilled farms, but he also has to drive the tractor on the farms when weeds grow after the monsoons. This worker is named Kishan, and he has been trained in using a tractor from Punjab Agriculture University. Now he is responsible for the farming. Another worker, Jaswant Harijan, cares for the cattle. He cuts the fodder and feeds it to the buffaloes. He also digs up the soil in the orchard. Partap, another servant, looks after the tube-well. When we sow wheat, we usually get electricity at night, and he irrigates the fields all night. Apart from this, he also has to buy many tools for the farms...like fertilisers, diesel, pesticides etc. The tube-well often needs to be repaired. This way, a lot of his time is spent in these errands. Our car driver also cuts out the diseased branches of mango trees in his free time. He drives the car for only two days in a week, and has a lot of free time. He prunes the other plants and also trims the hedges.

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There should be barbed wire around the orchard so that animals and boys cannot enter. This is why we have constructed cemented pillars and barbed wires around all our farms. Maintaining them is expensive. Apart from these three servants, we also hire daily wage labourers who work on Sundays. We keep more labourers when we have to sow the paddy. A lot of men need to be kept for harvesting wheat and digging potatoes.

You may believe this or not, but our workers eat the same food that we eat. Everyone is given an egg and a glass of milk every day, they are also given fruits to eat as per the season. I believe that this fact differentiates us from other farmers. Giving them these things is possible for me because we also keep hens and buffaloes on our farm, apart from growing food grains and fruits. These eggs and milk are only used for the needs of the household. Many people say that it is not important to offer eggs to the workers, or that they do not need eggs, but I say that if eggs are good for our health, they must be good for their health as well. Apart from this, protein-rich food keeps them healthy, and their children will also be healthy when they grow up. We should know that the children who do not get enough protein when they are young, do not grow up properly. If there is a shortage of protein in the diet, the brain does not develop well. This is why I want that our workers' children should also grow well like my grandsons. Along with this, I believe in practical socialism. This is why I do not like shouting slogans alone.

Some women from Naya Sheher Wadala, a nearby village, also come to work for us. I gift them clothes on Baisakhi, Lohri and Rakhri. I also do not stop them from taking fodder from us. I give them food to eat and to take back to their homes. When someone is sick in their house, I also give them medicine for small ailments. The poor people who cannot pay doctors' fees get treatment from me. I often take them to the hospital in my car, especially when someone is really sick.

The kitchen is the centre of farming. Something keeps getting cooked in our kitchen all day; our servant Kishan's wife Sheela cooks food for the workers the whole day. When I am not engaged elsewhere, I also work in the kitchen. Apart from this, the tea kettle is always on the stove, and the workers get tea two times a day.

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This costs 200 Rupees of sugar a month.

Keeping accounts is another task, I remain engaged in this for long periods of time. I have instructed my servants to get receipts for everything they buy. Apart from this, I keep accounts of their payment. I get their thumbprints on the payment record. Those who work all the time sign in the payment register every month.

Our buffaloes are also like members of our family; the only difference is that they cannot talk. This is why I focus a lot on their care. I do not let them, or their calves stay in the sun for long, and bathe them at the right time. Supervising the milking is especially important. I take care that the person going to milk the animals has washed his hands with soap before.

A new process that we have started is to make manure with garbage, dung, faeces, and urine. We have gotten two pits dug out; all the kitchen waste, pruned branches, leaves and weeds are thrown in them. The animals' dung reaches this pit via a permanent drain. Two

latrines have been constructed over the other pit, one for men and the other for women. This way all the human waste goes into the pit, and it is used as manure later. Now we have set up a biogas plant in this pit. This cost us 8000 Rupees to set up. Its benefit is that we get gas to cook food, and slurry reaches the farms via a drain. It has two main benefits — manure and cooking gas; prior to constructing the biogas plant, the gas would just escape into the air but now it can be used in the kitchen.

After harvesting, taking care of the wheat is another one of my responsibilities. I mix phosphine pills in the wheat in May and June. We start using the new wheat in July itself. We eat the previous year's wheat before this. I get the wheat and gram cleaned before sending them to the mill. We extract the smaller, bad grain for the hens, or cook them into porridge for the cattle.

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Many of my friends and visitors who come from Chandigarh ask, “Do you not get tired of living here alone, especially when your husband spends five days a week in Ludhiana?” I tell them that I remain busy in work and so I do not feel lonely. There is so much work at the farm that I do not get the time to go anywhere. Secondly, because petrol has become expensive, I go to Chandigarh to meet my friend Mrs. Sumitra Joshi only two times a week. She is the wife of the late Dr. A.C. Joshi; she has asthma. She is happy to meet me, and she feels better than before whenever I meet her.

Whatever I have told you about our farming will explain how it is not a source of income for us. This is a way of life. In 1970, 2000 Rupees used to be spent on the fertilisers, today it costs 5000 Rupees. The chemical fertilisers and manure have both become more expensive. Bringing them via trucks has also become expensive. Our two buffaloes and their calves give manure only for 3 acres of land. The rest of the land is sprayed with chemical fertilisers, or manure needs to be bought and brought from Chandigarh, for it. We buy 10 trucks of manure from villages surrounding Chandigarh. Adding the labour of the workers amounts to 10,000 Rupees per year.

What I have understood about this farming is that it is more productive than the traditional methods, but it is more expensive. This is why those who do not have any other source of income cannot adopt this work. Machine farming is expensive. The bills of the tractor and tube-well keep accumulating, and whatever we get out of selling the produce goes into the pockets of shopkeepers selling agricultural implements. This money also goes to the electricians we call for small repairs. The rest is taken by those who work on the farm. When we add our accounts, we see that we save nothing. I get about 250 Rupees per month as a farm manager, this is equivalent to the earnings of a worker. The wear and tear of the buildings, machinery and implements amounts to 3000 Rupees a year. All our produce is not enough to satisfy our expenses. This maximum productivity happens when the rains are good. I have to spend a lot of money from my husband's salary to fill the losses.

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But we do not have any regrets about this because we get clean and unadulterated food.

Making butter from milk is good for exercise. Now machines for extracting butter can be easily found but I do not use them. If I were to use them, I would stop exercising. It is very delightful to bathe at the tube-well. We cannot let go of this pleasure. The water of the tube-well is cool in the summer and warm in the winter. We believe that man is not born for earning money alone, he is born to work. He should distribute and share whatever he grows. We are following the example of Guru Nanak Dev ji; he was given some land by Jeeta Randhawa in Kartarpur during his last years. He would give all the produce from his fields in the langar, and visitors would partake of that food. We live in the midst of nature; we share whatever we grow with our workers. I like this life, and this experience is very dear to us.”

—

## GLOSSARY

**Aamlana:** in truth/ reality

**Aarti:** Ritual worship with lit lamps in tray moved in a circular motion in front of an idol or person with an accompanying hymn of praise.

**Ahuti:** sacrificial offering for fire-worship esp. in a yajna/ havan

**Algoza:** double-fluted musical instrument

**Akk:** medicinal plant

**Amrit:** sacred water

**Anabi:** wine-coloured

**Anna:** old coin now obsolete, 1/16<sup>th</sup> of a rupee in value

**Arain:** an agricultural caste from the Punjab region, mostly Muslim

**Ardaas:** supplicatory prayer, especially of the Sikhs

**Arjuna:** *Terminalia arjuna*, a tree species also used for its medicinal properties in Ayurveda.

**Arora:** A community originating from the Punjab region. It is one of the branches of the Khatri caste, the other being Panjabi Khatri.

**Assalamu-alaikum:** ‘Peace be upon you’ (Arabic)

**Bagdi:** A tribe claiming Kshatriya status, varying across Bengal, Rajasthan, Gujarat, and Punjab. They are mainly agriculturists and are also said to belong to the Jatts and Gujjar sub-castes.

**Baheda:** A herb, Baheda is generally termed *Belliric Myrobalan* in **English**, and its botanical name is *Terminalia bellerica*. In Sanskrit, the tree is known as Vibhita or Vibhitaka, which means fearless.

**Baisakh/ Vaisakh** month: Month in the North Indian calendar, typically corresponds to mid-April to mid-May in the Gregorian calendar. Refer to calendar at the end of the Glossary.

**Baisakhi:** Spring festival on the first day of the Baisakh month (April-May), celebrates the season of the harvesting of crops.

**Bani:** or *vani* means speech/word. So, Gurbani means the Guru’s word, and is used to refer to the holy scriptures.

**Baniya:** Hindu shopkeeper, grocer, trader, merchant, moneylender, businessman. Belongs to the Vaishya caste of traders.

**Banwasi/Vanvasi:** forest-dweller. (Ban/Van: Forest, and Wasi, or inhabitant/dweller.)

**Baoli:** step-well. See Agrasen-ki Baoli, and the famous stepwells of Rajasthan for reference.

**Baraat:** wedding procession

**Baraati:** members of a wedding procession

**Barasingha:** a species of swamp deer with multiple antlers (baara=12, singha=antler)

**Basuhti:** cape myrtle flower

**Bazaar:** marketplace

**Bedi:** A caste of Sikh khatri/ kshatriyas in North India.

**Been:** wind instrument, also called a pungi

**Begum:** queen, also denotes wife

**Ber/Beri:** North Indian berries; *Ziziphus mauritiana*, also known as Chinese date, ber, Chinese apple, jujube, Indian plum, Regi pandu, Indian jujube, dunks (in Barbados) and masau (in Zimbabwe), is a tropical fruit tree species belonging to the family Rhamnaceae.

**Besan, vesan:** gram flour

**Bhabhi ji:** sister-in-law

**Bhadon:** August-September as per the North Indian calendar

**Bhajan:** Hindu devotional song, can also apply to devotional songs of other religions, including Sikh.

**Bhakti** or **Bhagti:** worship

**Bhalla:** lentil dumpling

**Bhapa:** Today, a pejorative term used to refer to the Sikh refugees belonging to Rawalpindi and surrounding areas who came to India for re-settlement. This term was originally used (including by Randhawa, as marker of caste and region) to refer to Khatri and Arora Sikh traders, and is derived from a term of respect used by them in the Pothohari Punjabi dialect — ‘bhapa’ or ‘bhapa ji’ literally means ‘brother’.

**Bhatura:** puffed fried bread

**Bibi:** Noun, feminine term of respect for women, informal: colloquial term of address used variously for mother/ sister/ daughter/ daughter-in-law

**Bigha:** a measure of land area varying locally from 1/3 to 1 acre (1/8 to 2/5 hectare)

**Binde:** small monsoon insects

**Boli** (plural: Boliyaan): folk songs performed in Punjab to the rhythm of clapping

**Burj:** tower, minaret, pillar, dome

**Chacha ji:** uncle, father’s younger brother

**Chachi ji:** aunt, lit. wife of the father’s younger brother.

**Chamardi:** Dalit habitation, lit., where the leather working (Chamri, or leather) Dalit caste lives on the outskirts of the village.

**Chamba/ Champa:** *Magnolia champaca*, a flowering tree known for its fragrance

**Chameli:** Jasmine

**Chapatti:** thin unleavened flat bread made in South Asia, and in other parts of the world

**Charhi** or **Chari:** sorghum

**Chaur:** a flywhisk used to turn away flies, made of yak’s tail, peacock feathers, or synthetic material. For example, it is used by priests to turn flies away from the *Guru Granth Sahib* in gurdwaras. Now, because fans are installed in temples, using this serves as custom.

**Chimte:** long tong-like instruments used to make music by beating them together.

**Chonk-Phul:** Perhaps a piece of jewellery braided into the hair on top of the head. It could also mean flowers braided into the hair.

**Chooda:** Heavy red and white bangles worn by brides.

**Churidar:** A stretchy and tight-fitting pyjama, worn by both men and women. Churidar trousers/pyjamas are narrow, and cling to the legs.

**Chutney:** spicy condiment of Indian origin, made of fruits or vegetables with vinegar, spices, and sugar; sauce or a dry base for a sauce

**Daang:** bamboo stick, club, bludgeon, cudgel, stave, staff, nightstick

**Dadi:** paternal grandmother

**Dadrasi:** relief

**Darbar:** assembly, court, hall of audience

**Darshan:** lit., to see. It is usually used for religious purposes, where pilgrims perform darshan or 'see' the deity.

**Darwaza:** door

**Datun:** neem twig used to clean teeth

**Dera:** socio-religious organization

**Desi Ghee:** desi refers to local, native, or indigenous, ghee is clarified butter

**Dhad:** small drum

**Dharamshala:** Inn, rest-house for travellers. Usually built for religious or charitable purposes.

**Dhobi:** washer-person, usually male.

**Dhoti:** a garment worn on the waist and covering the legs

**Dogra:** an Indo-Aryan ethno-linguistic group from India and Pakistan. In this context, since M.S. Randhawa's family lives in the Doaba region which is at the foothills of the Shivalik mountain range, the Dogras live nearby, that is, in Jammu and the surrounding areas.

**Doli:** palanquin used to carry the bride during marriage.

**Dupatta/Chunni:** women's scarf, wrapper, or veil

**Fakir:** wandering mendicant

**Falahi tree:** *Acaccia modesta*, is a thorny tree

**Gainda:** rhinoceros

**Galgal:** *Citrus pseudolimon* is an indigenous citrus fruit also called 'hill lemon' or 'Kumaon lemon'.

**Gali:** street (also spelt gully)

**Ganesh:** The elephant-God in Hinduism, is known to be fond of eating, serving his parents, being learned and wise, and blessing households with wealth, happiness and good fortune.

**Ghagara:** long, loose flowing skirt

**Ghazal:** short lyrical rhymed poem

**Golu:** a type of dye. It is also called neel, or indigo.

**Gopis:** milkmaids, female companions of the cow-herd god Lord Krishna

**Guluband:** muffler

**Gurbani:** Guru's word

**Gurdwara:** Sikh place of worship

**Gursikh:** Sikh of the Guru

**Haldu:** *Adina cordifolia*, a deciduous tree with oval shaped leaves which can grow to heights of 20 metres and above.



**Halwa:** a kind of pudding made with wheat flower or granulated wheat, sugar and clarified butter or ghee

**Hanuman:** principal devotee of Lord Ram in Hindu mythology, depicted as a monkey

**Harad:** a medicinal plant, scientific name: *Terminalia chebula*

**Havan:** fire-worship

**Haveli:** mansion

**Hawaldar:** Military rank equivalent to Sergeant. In the British Indian armies, a non-commissioned officer of native soldiers.

**Hooka:** smoking pipe

**Hooran, apsara:** beautiful women, heavenly dancers

**Hoshiarpuri:** of Hoshiarpur

**Huzoor:** honorific mode of address: your honour, sir, your lordship; noun masculine: presence, attendance; court.

**Ittelahi:** information

**Jagirdari:** feudalism, feudal system, where jagir is a territory to govern/collect taxes from

**Jagran:** singing prayers to deities all night; in the Hindu religion

**Jalebi:** A spiral sweet drenched in sugar syrup. Made from wheat flower spirals fried in oil and then soaked in sugar syrup, jalebi is a popular South Asian sweet.

**Janaab:** Honourable sir/ Your honour

**Janamashtami:** Hindu festival celebrated annually in August or September in honour of the birth of Lord Krishna.

**Japuji Sahib:** Japuji Sahib is the **first sacred composition** found in the main Sikh holy scripture called the **Guru Granth Sahib**, credited to the first Sikh Guru, Guru Nanak Dev ji.

**Jat/ Jutt:** Name of an agricultural caste of North-Western India; refers to a member of this caste, and also to a farmer, agriculturist, or peasant

**Jatha:** group of people with the same mission/ target

**Jathedar:** Leader/ commander of a group or jatha

**Jawan:** in the context of the army, jawan means soldier. In a general sense, jawan implies a young person.

**Jeth-Haad:** May/ June to June/ July

**Jharokha:** overhanging enclosed balcony used in the architecture of Rajasthan and Indo-Islamic architecture

**Jhioori (Jhioori: female, Jhioor: Male):** A caste of men and women engaged as professional cooks for weddings and large celebrations/occasions. Most of the furnaces in the village are owned by the Jhioor caste, here it refers to the furnace of a female jhioori.

**Ji:** Suffix of honour or respect, a term of endearment or reverence, sir; adverb yes sir or yes madam.

**Kachnar:** orchid tree species

**Kafir:** Infidel

**Kaintha tree:** *Cassia fistula*, commonly known as golden shower, purging cassia, Indian laburnum, or pudding-pipe tree, it bears profuse yellow flowers, is usually used as an ornamental plant, and is native to the Indian subcontinent and to South East Asia.

**Kako:** term of endearment. Kaka means baby, or child. It also stands for the masculine form, while Kaki or Kako is the feminine.

**Kalash:** a metal pot, usually placed on the shikhara or top of a temple, but also used in other ritual preparations

**Kaleera:** is a gold/silver umbrella shaped ornament attached to wedding bangles or *chooda*.

**Kalgi:** aigrette, turban ornament.

**Kamala or Kaamal tree:** *Mallotus philippensis*, red kamala or Kumkum tree

**Kamni:** orange jasmine flower

**Kaner:** *Cascabela thevetia*, the yellow oleander, grows in semi-arid regions

**Kanungo:** local law officer

**Kanwar:** prince

**Kara:** steel bangle, a symbol of Sikhism

**Karah Parshad:** ritual offering of a sweet prepared with wheat-flour, sugar and clarified butter, offered at the end of prayers; also pronounced prasad in Hindi

**Karahi:** a wok-style frying pan used in South Asian cooking

**Kattak:** 15 October – 13 November as per the North Indian calendar

**Kebab and Keema:** spiced meat rolls, and minced meat, respectively

**Keshdhari:** One who keeps long hair, literally: kesh means hair, and dhari (suffix) means one who wears it.

**Khadi:** hand-spun; also khaddar

**Khanda:** a two-edged sword

**Khartal:** percussion instrument worn on the hands. The hands move in a fast clapping motion for the faces of the khartal to click against each other in quick beats.

**Khes:** heavy cotton shawl or sheet, a cotton substitute for a blanket. Woven in criss-cross patterns, their thickness provides warmth in the winter.

**Khichdi:** a kind of savoury porridge made of rice, lentil, ghee, and spices

**Khoya:** condensed milk

**Khuda:** god

**Kikkar:** Acacia tree; Babool or Thorn Mimosa tree, *Vachellia nilotica*.

**Kirtan:** devotional music.

**Kotha:** an upper chamber or floor, also implies brothel

**Kumbh:** A vessel of water kept in the presence of the Guru Granth Sahib; it is believed that by the end of prayers, this water becomes amrit.

**Kushti:** wrestling

**Kutch:** impermanent, temporary, unbaked, half-baked; not built of baked brick or concrete

**Laddoo:** A round ball-like sweet made of different fillings with the basic ingredients being flour, fat and sugar. It has many variants like different kinds of flour, dried fruit and nuts, toppings, flavourings, and colours, but its round shape is distinctive.

**Lala:** epithet or form of address for a Hindu businessman

**Langar:** community kitchen

**Langot:** wrestlers' costume in rural areas, similar to that of Sumo wrestlers

**Lassi:** buttermilk

**Lathi:** a wooden stick, shaped like a rod

**Leela** or **Lila:** play or playful relation. Here, the play of love among Krishna, Radha, and the Gopis in Hindu myth.

**Linga:** abstract or aniconic representation of the Hindu deity Shiva in Shaivism. Typically the primary murti or cult image in Hindu temples dedicated to Shiva, shaped like a phallus to indicate the generative power of the deity.

**Lobana:** usually Sikh caste name from North India with different professions (transportation, agriculture, soldiers etc.).

**Loo:** Strong, dusty, gusty, hot, and dry summer wind from the west which blows over the western Indo-Gangetic Plain region of North India and Pakistan.

**Lugdi:** alcoholic drink savoured in the hills, it is made by fermenting rice or barley

**Maanh dal:** type of lentil or pulse, lit. horse bean, *Phaseolus radiatus*.

**Madhavi** vine: *Hiptage benghalensis*

**Maghi:** festival observed during the first of Magh, or the 11<sup>th</sup> month of the North Indian calendar

**Mahajan:** caste of businessmen, shopkeepers and moneylenders; also refers to these professions in general

**Mahant:** chief priest of a temple

**Maharaja:** king, lit. maha: great, raja: king

**Mahawat:** elephant trainer/ caretaker

**Mahseer:** common name for any of several species of edible game fish in the carp family

**Makhan tree:** *Ficus krishnae*, or Krishna's buttercup; a variety of fig, known for its cup-shaped leaves and popularly associated with the butter-loving god Krishna

**Makki di Roti:** Cornbread

**Malwayi:** people from the Malwa region of Punjab

**Mama ji:** Uncle, lit., the brother of one's mother

**Mandapa:** in Hindu temple architecture, a pillared hall or pavilion for public rituals

**Mansabdar:** A chain of military-cum-administrative command, instituted by Mughal Emperor Akbar. Mansab denotes a rank, and Mansabdar refers to a rank-holder.

**Marasi/ Mirasi:** people who traditionally sing and dance, can belong to different religious communities

**Marwari:** community originating from the Marwar region of Rajasthan; successful business community

**Mashk:** floating tubes of animal skin. The mashk is a traditional device made of goatskin used to carry water, traditionally associated with the bishti, the sub-caste of people responsible for carrying mashk filled with water in public places.

**Mata:** mother

**Maulsri:** *Mimusops elengi* is a medium-sized evergreen tree found in tropical forests in South Asia, Southeast Asia and northern Australia

**Maulvi:** Muslim priest

**Maund** or **Mann:** At different times, and in different South Asian localities, the mass of the maund has varied, from as low as **25 pounds (11 kg)** to as high as 160 pounds (72½ kg)

**Minar:** tower or turret

**Mishri:** sugar crystals

**Misl:** sect/ group

**Mohalla:** residential area/ locality; can also refer to street

**Moodi:** a cylindrical stool (sometimes spelt mudha)

**Moong dal:** green gram

**Morcha:** a technique of warfare, wherein the artillery, infantry, cavalry etc. are placed separately as per group divisions. This method of arranging groups has also been replicated in organising rallies.

**Motia:** a variety of the Jasmine flower.

**Mufti:** Muslim legal expert who can give rulings on religious matters

**Mujra:** singing and dancing performed by courtesans, evolved during the Mughal period

**Mundan:** tonsure ceremony is the first ceremony undertaken for Hindu new-borns after a year when their hair is shaved off and puja (prayer) is conducted for their healthy growth.

**Naib Tehsildar:** Assistant/ Deputy Tehsildar

**Nain:** female barber. They were match makers and so they would be especially invited to weddings.

**Nambardar/ Lambardar:** village headman

**Nani ji:** maternal grandmother

**Narsingha:** trumpet

**Nat:** are a marginalized lower caste, classified as Scheduled Caste in some states in India

**Neem:** *Ziziphus mauritiana*, also known as Chinese date, ber, Chinese apple, jujube, Indian plum, Regi pandu, Indian jujube, dunks (in Barbados) and masau (in Zimbabwe), is a tropical fruit tree species belonging to the family Rhamnaceae.

**Nihang:** originally Sikh warriors, practice traditional martial arts today. They live as sects of celibate warriors in some *deras* and are known for wearing elaborate turbans.

**Noor** or **Nur:** divine light

**Paakad:** white fig tree. Its scientific name is *Ficus virens*.

**Paan:** a betel leaf and areca nut preparation

**Padam:** wild Himalayan cherry tree

**Pahari:** lit., of the hill/ mountain.

**Pakodi raita** or **Boondi raita:** A cool, spiced curd dish usually served as an accompaniment to rice, with additions such as fried drops of chickpea flour or fritters.

**Pakora:** fritter

**Panchayat Ghar:** Lit. Panchayat (village administration, Panch means five, and Panchayat refers to a governing body of five leaders chosen from the village), and Ghar while literally meaning house/ home, here refers to the Panchayat Office.

**Parandi:** decorative hair extension. The parandi is a tasselled tag for binding or braiding hair.

**Parantha:** Indian bread stuffed with butter and then fried/ toasted. It can have many different fillings made of vegetables, meats and so on.

**Parda:** Hindu and Muslim practice of screening women from meeting men or strangers by using a veil/ curtain.

**Patasha;** plural Patashae, a kind of sweet-drop, sugar bubble

**Patwari:** Village-level revenue official tasked with land measurement, keeping records of land holdings, surveying crops, and calculating land revenue, and having the administrative authority to mediate in case of land disputes.

**Peepal tree:** Sacred fig tree, *Ficus religiosa*

**Phagun:** mid-March and **Chet** mid-April. Refer to calendar at the end of the Glossary.

**Peehai:** name for a low stool.

**Phulkari:** embroidered cloth, can be floral or figurative, traditionally made at home by women.

**Pinni:** a round sweet made by rolling a mixture of flour, dried fruit, and nuts roasted in ghee. Usually made in North India in winters.

**Pir:** Muslim Sufi master or spiritual guide

**Pita:** father

**Poh:** December-January. Refer to chart calendar at the end of the Glossary.

**Pooni:** spindle covered with yarn

**Pothohari:** lit., of Pothohar, people belonging to the Pothohar region. Pothohar is a plateau region in North Eastern Pakistan.

**Pucca:** built of concrete or baked bricks, enduring, permanent

**Pungara flower:** *Eclipta prostrata* or false daisy/ bhringraj

**Rababis:** lit., rabab-players; rabab is a lute-like musical instrument

**Raga:** musical scale

**Ragi:** one who sings the *raga*, used to refer to Sikh hymn-singers.

**Ram Chandra:** or Lord Ram, an avatara of God Vishnu in Hindu mythology. The legend of his life is narrated in the epic Ramayana.

**Ramdhari:** devotee of Lord Rama

**Ramlila:** performance of the Ramayana

**Roshan daan:** A ventilator-like opening in the walls of the house which is made for letting sunlight into the house and ventilating it with a constant flow of air. Its double function lies in its name, 'roshan' which means 'throw light upon' as 'roshani' means light.

**Saavan:** July-August. Refer to chart of calendar at the end of the Glossary.

**Sahib:** Master, lord, boss, honourable person; Sir, honorific fixed to names or designations. Also used to refer to white men and Europeans.

**Salwar:** loose lower garment, with folds, shaped like a pyjama

**Sangrand/ Sankranti:** first day of each month as per the traditional calendar, oriented to the waxing and waning of the moon.

**Sarangi:** a string instrument played with a bow

**Sardarni:** Sikh woman

**Saron da Saag:** a vegetable made of mustard greens

**Sarovar:** sacred tank

**Sehra:** chaplet, laurel or wreath, typically a headband with falling tassels which cover the groom's face

**Seth:** rich merchant or businessman, moneylender, wealthy person

**Seva:** service

**Shabad Kirtan:** Sikh religious hymns

**Shagun:** A token of good luck and wishes given by the to-be bride's family. This token usually comprises a gift of clothes, sweets, and money.

**Shayari:** Urdu for poetry

**Sheesham** or **Tahli:** Indian rosewood tree

**Shikhara:** upper peaked portion of temple

**Shikra:** raptor bird

**Shilpkar:** lit., craftsperson/craftspeople

**Sringara Rasa:** rasa (roughly, flavour) of erotic love, attraction, and beauty

**Simbal/ Semal** tree: Bombax ceiba or cotton tree, red silk-cotton; red cotton tree. This Asian tropical tree has a straight tall trunk and its leaves are deciduous in winter. Red flowers with 5 petals appear in the spring before the new foliage.

**Sindoor:** vermilion; used at the centre of the hairline, denotes married status of a Hindu woman

**Siropa:** honorary clothing, usually a scarf

**Sua:** distributary of a canal

**Subedar:** provincial governor; a junior commissioned rank in the Indian and Pakistani army

**Sukhmani Sahib:** part of the Guru Granth Sahib and composed by the 5<sup>th</sup> Sikh Guru, Guru Arjan Dev. 84 lakh births or joonian refers to the inescapable cycle of birth and death that all living beings are condemned to pass through before they can attain salvation from this cycle, or moksha. Commonly cited in Hindu scripture and interpretations, this idea is also articulated by some Sikhs.

**Sukkha:** an opioid intoxicant, also called bhang

**Suniar:** goldsmith, goldsmith caste

**Taaya:** Father's elder brother

**Takhtposh:** takht or low, wooden bed/ platform

**Talukdar/ Taluqdar:** Aristocrats who formed the ruling class during the Mughal and British times, who owned vast hereditary lands, and were responsible for collecting taxes.

**Talukdarni** is woman-Talukdar.

**Talukdari/ Taluqdari:** district or estate ruled by a Talukdar

**Tappe:** semi-classical songs, fast paced, usually addressed to lovers/ separation of lovers. The songs are mobile and rhythmic, with beats symbolising lovers meeting and parting.

**Tarkhan:** carpenter, also a caste name of carpenters

**Tatiri:** Red-wattled lapwing

**Tehsil:** revenue or administrative sub-division of a district; its office or headquarters

**Tehsildar:** officer heading revenue administration of a tehsil

**Terai:** a belt of marshy jungle lying between the lower foothills of the Himalayas and the plains

**Terna:** a kind of small spinning-wheel used to make balls of yarn

**Thada:** cemented platform

**Thakur:** title for nobleman/ landowner

**Thakurain/ Thakurani:** wife of a Thakur

**Thanedar:** officer in charge of a police station (thana)

**Tilyar:** small, brown, or black migratory bird found in India and Pakistan

**Tonga:** or Tanga, a light two-wheeled vehicle drawn by one horse or more. Used for transportation in India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. They have a canopy over the carriage with a single pair of large wheels.

**Toomba:** traditional musical instrument of the Punjab region. Also called a 'Tumbi', it makes a high-pitched sound, and has a single string which is plucked to add music to folk songs.

**Toon tree:** red cedar

**Tootani:** musical instrument with two flutes

**Vadi:** lentil fritter

**Vanjhali:** flute-like traditional wind instrument

**Vatna:** paste prepared with oil, barley flour and turmeric. Used to massage the bride and bridegroom as a wedding ritual before the vows taken around the sacred fire/ Anand Karaj (Sikh wedding) are finalised.

**Vazir:** minister

**Velna:** area where sugarcane juice is cooked to make jaggery

**Wah:** Wow! or Great!; used as an exclamation of approbation

**Waheguru ji ka Khalsa, Waheguru ji ki Fateh!:** Sikh salutation

**Waheguru:** name for God or ultimate reality

**Zarabaktar:** military uniform

**Zilla:** local administrative division

**Zilladar:** administrator of a zilla

## ACRONYMS

A.D.C.: Additional Deputy Commissioner  
A.D.M.: Additional District Magistrate  
A.S.P.: Additional Superintendent of Police  
B.D.O.: Block Development Officer  
C.I.D.: Criminal Investigation Department  
C.S.I.R.: Council of Scientific and Industrial Research  
D.C.: Deputy Commissioner/ District Collector  
F.A.O.: Food and Agricultural Organisation  
I.C.A.R.: Indian Council of Agricultural Research  
I.C.S.: Indian Civil Service  
N.E.F.A.: North East Frontier Agency, today the state of Arunachal Pradesh  
P.C.S.: Provincial Civil Service  
PEPSU: Patiala and East Punjab States Union  
P.W.D: Public Works Department  
S.D.O.: Sub-Divisional Officer  
S.P.: Superintendent of Police  
S.S.P.: Senior Superintendent of Police



## MONTHS IN THE NORTH INDIAN CALENDAR

| No. | Name           | Punjabi | Days  | Gregorian Months          | Season                            |
|-----|----------------|---------|-------|---------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1   | <u>Chet</u>    | ਚੇਤ     | 31    | 14 March – 13 April       | Basant (Spring)                   |
| 2   | <u>Vaisakh</u> | ਵੈਸਾਖ   | 31    | 14 April – 14 May         | Basant (Spring)                   |
| 3   | <u>Jeth</u>    | ਜੇਠ     | 31    | 15 May – 14 June          | Garikham (Summer)                 |
| 4   | <u>Harh</u>    | ਹਾੜ     | 31    | 15 June – 15 July         | Garisham (Summer)                 |
| 5   | <u>Sawan</u>   | ਸਾਵਣ    | 31    | 16 July – 15 August       | Rut Baras (Rainy season)          |
| 6   | <u>Bhadon</u>  | ਭਾਦੋਂ   | 30    | 16 August – 14 September  | Rut Baras (Rainy season)          |
| 7   | <u>Assu</u>    | ਅੱਸੂ    | 30    | 15 September – 14 October | Sard (Autumn)                     |
| 8   | <u>Kattak</u>  | ਕੱਤਕ    | 30    | 15 October – 13 November  | Sard (Autumn)                     |
| 9   | <u>Maghar</u>  | ਮੱਘਰ    | 30    | 14 November – 13 December | Sisiar (Winter)                   |
| 10  | <u>Poh</u>     | ਪੋਹ     | 30    | 14 December – 12 January  | Sisiar (Winter)                   |
| 11  | <u>Magh</u>    | ਮਾਘ     | 30    | 13 January – 11 February  | Himkar (late Winter/early Spring) |
| 12  | <u>Phagun</u>  | ਫੱਗਣ    | 30/31 | 12 February – 13 March    | Himkar (late Winter/early Spring) |

Note: The Punjabi names are ultimately derived from Sanskrit, and so the months are common across North Indian languages with minor differences in pronunciation.

Calendar from: Kohli, Surinder Singh. *A Conceptual Encyclopaedia of Guru Granth Sahib*, Manohar Publishers & Distributors, 1992.