

IN HIS HANDS

my personal tales of the extraordinary.

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Dear Reader

I am an 81-year-old person, leading a retired life with my wonderful wife and two loving young sons, who are married and well settled in their professions. One is an IT consultant and the other a Trauma Surgeon. By God's grace, I have enough money and insurance to live a comfortable life, with no worries and tension. On top of that, God has blessed me with the honor of translating *Sri Guru Granth Sahib* and publishing three other complimentary books.

The purpose of writing this small book, which is a kind of memoir, is not to write my life story, or to present any scholarly or religious sermon, but my humble attempt to share some extraordinary events of my life. These events have lead me to the inevitable conclusion that: **if we love God, approach Him the right way, and put our fate in His Hands, He will not only listen to our prayers, but will also bless us and protect us at every step like a kind and loving Father.** Why do I make this bold statement, and what is the proof thereof? For those answers, I ask you to read at least some of the episodes of my life described here.

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Family Background

Before, I proceed further though, it may be helpful to share some of my family background. This way, readers who don't know me, as

well as future generations of my family, can have some idea about the circumstances and atmosphere in which I was born and raised. These formed and developed my values, beliefs, and general attitude about life.

I was born in 1937 in a devoted Sikh family, originally belonging to northwestern Punjab (now a part of Pakistan). My family has been Sikhs for longer than anyone can remember. My father, S. Hari Singh Jawa, was a teacher in Khalsa School Amritsar (now Guru Nanak University). He was a class fellow or friend of such famous Sikhs as Principal Jodh Singh (First Vice Chancellor of Punjabi University, Patiala), Dr. Bhaaee Vir Singh (famous Punjabi poet, and religious fiction writer), and Principal Sahib Singh, whose Punjabi interpretation of *Sri Guru Granth Sahib* (The Sikh Bible) is generally considered the best among those available.

My father, besides being a learned scholar in both academic and religious fields, was a great orator. My mother and elder brothers would tell me that one time the Maharaja (ruler) of Patiala happened to listen to a lecture my father gave. The Maharaja was so impressed by his knowledge and delivery that, right on the spot, he offered my father the post of Deputy Director of Education of Patiala State. This is how our family moved to Patiala. Unknown to the family, this would be an advantage in the future.

In 1947, as India was in the process of gaining independence from British rule, the area then known as India was divided into three sections, mostly along religious lines. As a result, the eastern part of Bengal (now Bangladesh), and western part of the province of Punjab, which had majority Muslim population, were allocated to Pakistan, and the remaining areas in the center of the sub-continent were allocated to India. As for individual states, theoretically, it was

left to their rulers to join whichever country they wished. But this became a very complicated process. What looks easy on a map on paper, is not easy when people's lives are affected. This process affected millions of lives, my family included.

One unfortunate consequence of the "choice" of national affiliation created the volatile situation continuing in Kashmir today. The Maharaja of Kashmir, who was a Hindu, chose to join India, even though the overwhelming majority of his population was Muslim. Both countries wanted this area and the conflict continues.

I was only about 10 or 11, in 5th grade, when we started hearing talk about India's independence. As young boy, I didn't really pay much attention. This was adult talk, it had nothing to do with my day-to-day concerns, but I learned much differently.

More and more public meetings about India and Pakistan were announced. Slogans began to fill the air. I didn't understand the emotions behind all the commotion. Until this time, we would study and play together with our Muslim friends. Actually, our next-door neighbors were Muslim, and many times, I used to join one of their sons when he would take his lovely goat out for feeding on grass or green tree leaves.

Suddenly the atmosphere changed. The man who took care of our cows, who milked them and took them out to graze, quit his job. He said he no longer felt safe visiting non-Muslim homes such as ours. In this time, many of our distant relatives, who lived in northwest Punjab, or other areas which would go to Pakistan, came to our house and stayed for long periods of time. I didn't fully understand that they were refugees seeking a safer place to live.

At the same time, we heard that trains full of Hindus, Sikhs, and other non-Muslims were coming from the Pakistan allocated area to

India, and similar trains full of Muslims were going from India to Pakistan. While in the process of travelling from one side to the other, many individuals and even families were looted, raped, and killed. Sometimes the entire train would be subjected to this kind of attack. Trains would arrive at their destination with all the passengers murdered.

My family was not exempt from the turmoil. The husband of one of my cousin's was fatally stabbed while making preparations to move from Lahore (future Pakistan) to India. My wife told me that, just in the nick of time, her family boarded the last train from Lahore to India. Many of their close relatives, including my wife's maternal aunts, travelled in a caravan wearing shabby and tattered clothes in hopes to avoid becoming victims of robbery or rape. Her aunts were young then and the ragged clothes offered some protection. If they had looked prosperous, they would have been targets for attack. With great difficulty they reached a temporary shelter and were able to board the next train to India.

In this process of migration and transfer of entire populations in such horrific circumstances, about one million people were killed. The upheaval was so vast no one could really count all the tragedies. There is no count of the number of families who were displaced from their homes and communities. It took many years for these families to get used to their new places, and stand on their feet, and regain their livelihood. Even today, some of these displaced people are treated as second class citizens in their new countries. As time passes, and those who experienced these horrors first hand pass on, maybe the trauma can fade away. Most of these unfortunate people didn't want to leave all that they knew and worked for, but hate and vengeance are irrational and the suffering was immense. Many

people warned of this tragic possibility, but they were ignored and nothing was done to prevent it.

This upheaval of populations was, of course, a great loss to all the communities involved, but it was an especially severe financial, and cultural loss to the Sikh community. The western part of Punjab state, which was allocated to Pakistan, was the area where Sikhs had their roots for many centuries. Many important Sikh Gurdwaras remain in present-day Pakistan.

A Gurdwara is a Sikh worship center and open to everyone. It is not only a place where Sikhs can assemble for congregational worship and instruction, it is also a source of social services. All gurdwaras have a hall where people can come for a free vegetarian meal. Some also have a medical clinic, maybe a library, a nursery, a gift shop, meeting rooms, sports facilities, playground, even a repair shop.

Each gurdwara has the Sikh holy scripture, *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, enshrined on a special, elevated throne as a source of reverence and respect, much like every synagogue has at least one Torah scroll enshrined in the Tabernacle in front of the congregation. It is holy.

The first gurdwara was built in Kartarpur on the banks of the Ravi River, in 1521. It is now in Pakistan. There are many other Sikh holy sites in Pakistan, These include Nankana Sahib, the very place where Guru Nanak, the first prophet or the founder of Sikhism, was born and raised. Because Sikhs are not Muslim, they were forced to flee during the Partition. Because of this traumatic loss of not only their homes, businesses, and livelihood, but their very roots, Sikhs are still grieving and praying daily to have a free access to their ancestral places of worship. Travel between India and Pakistan is not

easy nor always possible. Often the two countries are in a near state of war.

As a result of the Partition, today Patiala is a city that is nearly evenly half Hindu and half Sikh. It was not so when I was a child.

I don't know what happened to the Muslim family who used to live next door to us, but, after Partition, their house remained empty for a long time. Ultimately some of my relatives moved into it. They, along with many other Partition refugees, lived in temporary camps for a while until new, more permanent housing, was found for them. They paid rent to the government and eventually were able to own the house. Some attempt was made to compensate people for the property they lost, but so few records existed before the Partition, and those weren't shared between governments, that this process was never really satisfactory.

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My Birth

I was born in Patiala, India in southeastern Punjab. Patiala is not an old city by comparison with other Indian cities. It was established as the seat of the Maharaja, the local ruler. The city grew up around the fort known as Qila Mubarak. In the late 1760s the rulers of Patiala began to assume more status as royalty. They sided with the British as their rule began to bring order to the states aligned with them.

Patiala was a deliberately designed city, unlike most others in India. Its design is similar to that of Hindu temple architecture. There

are many historic sites in Patiala which attract tourists that I would encourage you to visit. I didn't think about them much as a boy when I lived in the city, they were simply "there." The Baradari Gardens are also impressive. They contain the Rajendra Kothi, the first heritage hotel in Punjab. The other place worth visiting is Moti Mehal (the palace, where the rulers of Patiala used to reside).

Since the Partition, several institutions of higher education including Medical college and Engineering college (where, I received my engineering degree), have been established in Patiala. Besides these, a full-fledged university, called Punjabi University, has been established in Patiala, offering M.S, and Ph.d courses in Law, education, commerce, and languages.

Because of some confusion in the conversion from Indian to English calendar in my *Janam Patri* (Astrological chart), I was born either on June 7, 1936 or July 30, 1937. In all official records, my date of birth is recorded as July 30, 1937, however on the basis of my habits, and character traits (more like that of a Gemini), I believe and celebrate my birthday on June 7.

I was the youngest child from the second marriage of my father. His first wife died leaving him with four young boys. She also had a girl who died very young. My father tried to take care of the boys himself, but his job at that time required a lot of traveling. Neighbors tried to help, and he hired servants, but none were adequate. He remarried. The second wife had three boys, I was the last.

My mother used to tell me that I was considered very lucky, because the day I was born my father obtained his first pension. He had been fighting the state for it for many years.

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My Childhood

The earliest memories of my childhood are those of a very weak child looking at my old father, who was suffering from deep psychological and physical setbacks. All of his life savings were cheated away by his first wife's brother. He also faced stiff opposition from his elder sons for his plans to distribute his property equally between the sons from the first and the second wife. The sons from the first wife wanted a bigger share on account of their larger number (4 versus 3).

This situation often resulted in many scenes of hot and passionate arguments between my parents and step brothers. In the end, none of us stayed in this house. The step brothers lost the case, and had to vacate the house. After a few years both our parents died and my full brothers and I all immigrated to the USA.

In spite of all these tensions and ugly scenes, there was a very big bright side to my childhood memories. We lived in a very big house, with ten rooms surrounding a very large courtyard in the middle. This courtyard was where my two brothers and I, several of my step brothers' children, and also our common friends, would play games: marbles, cricket, volleyball, hide and seek, and many others. It was our own private playground.

Also, we had one room in which *Guru Granth Sahib* was duly installed. It was a sacred room. *Guru Granth Sahib* is the sacred Sikh scripture. Its final form was compiled by the tenth Guru of the Sikhs. It is the highest spiritual and religious guide for Sikhs. It is the eternal living Guru. Simply being in a room with it is a reverent experience. Many times we would all join in prayers in that room, particularly at such special occasions as Diwali, the Festival of

Lights which marks the beginning of a new year, and *Sangrant* (the first day of a new Indian month).

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My First Divine Experience

I would say that my first divine experience happened when, while going to my primary school, a person riding one of the donkeys he was herding, lit his pipe. It was common for men of his class to smoke earthen, hand-held pipes. In lighting such pipes, embers would often float away and fade out before landing. Accidently some burning embers from his pipe fell down onto my turban. I was unaware of what happened. When I reached my school, my teacher noted some smoke coming out from my head. She immediately removed my turban, poured some water on my head, and extinguished the smoldering fire.

I believe that this must have been some divine intervention, that the ember smoldered slowly in the cloth of turban, that my teacher noticed my situation in the nick of time and took appropriate action, otherwise it could have been a serious situation. Hair burns very quickly.

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Divine Dream

My second divine experience, or divine boon, was bestowed on me when I was preparing for my final exam for F. SC (Non-medical – the second year of my undergraduate degree). I had two very close friends, Gian and Gurcharan, and often used to study together with one or the other of them; and many times even slept at the house of one or the other.

A few days before the final exam, I fell asleep after studying at Gurcharan's house. There I had a dream that I was sitting in the examination hall and writing the Punjabi (language) paper. On this paper I saw a couple of stanzas from our poetry book, with brief explanation and reference to the context. But these stanzas were not very vividly readable. This one question was worth 15 points out of 50 points, so it was very important.

Also in the dream I saw a list of topics for writing an essay and one of the topics was Sri Guru Gobind Singh Ji, an historic figure. This question was worth 25 points out of 50 points. It was a major part of the test. Another strange thing was that while other topics were somewhat hazy, and difficult to read, the topic "Sri Guru Gobind Singh Ji", was so clear as if written in bold black letters. Another strange thing was that we (including my friends, fellow students, or professor) had never considered "Sri Guru Gobind Singh Ji" as a serious topic to be part of the exam, so we hadn't studied up on him.

When I woke up in the morning, I related this dream to my friend Gurcharan, and suggested that we should study and prepare for this topic. He dismissed the idea.

"Let us first prepare for the other subjects," he said, dismissing

my concern. “We can look at this topic the day before the Punjabi exam, that will be enough time to prepare for that subject.”

So, we turned our attention to the other subjects. After a few days, Gurcharan and I had some serious argument over something, and I stopped studying with him. Instead, I joined Gian for joint study and preparation for the final exam. I shared the same dream about Sri Guru Gobind Singh Ji to him.

“We can study about him the day before the exam,” he said, just as Gurcharan had.

The day before the exam, he and I decided to prepare for the poetry first, then other items and the important essay topics last. Since the Punjabi exam was the next afternoon, we left some of this studying for the next morning.

At that time, after preparing for everything else, when we came to the essay topics, we realized that we didn’t have much time left. Soon we would need to get properly dressed and head for the examination hall.

“We should at least read the essay on Sri Guru Gobind Singh Ji,” I urged my friend.

“I don’t think he’s that important,” Gian replied. “I’m going to study other topics which I think will more likely be on the exam.” I was tempted to follow his example, but was stopped.

“Daljit,” my inner voice said to me. “I told you about this topic many days before and made it absolutely clear it is important. Read what your book says on this topic at least one time.” I hastily went over the essay in my book and then started to dress for the exam.

I reached the examination hall, and found my assigned seat. There I began to read the exam. Lo and behold, to my astonishment, in the list of essays topics, “Sri Guru Gobind Singh Ji,” was visible like a

beacon! I was delighted! I'm sure there were invisible rays of joy on my face!

“Let me take care of the other questions on poetry and other questions first,” I said to myself as I contained my joy. “Then I will come back to the essay questions.”

After I finished answering other questions, I looked at the list of all the essay topics. I had to select one to write an essay on worth 25 points out of 50 for the entire paper. I thought I had prepared for, or read much more about other topics, but had only hastily read about “Sri Guru Gobind Singh Ji” that one time. I was tempted to select some other topic for my essay.

“Daljit,” the inner voice began again before I could begin writing. “I told you about this topic so many days before, and even made you read about it just before coming to the exam. If you still select some other topic, you will regret it. Simply start writing on the topic and then let your pen be guided by me. I will help you.”

This time I decided to trust the guidance.

I selected the topic, and started writing about “Sri Guru Gobind Singh Ji.” Soon I found that my pen was writing one story after another covering how he inspired his own father to go and sacrifice his life for the sake of the Hindu religion, how he appeared on the Vaisakhi day of 1699, and in a roaring voice challenged his congregation to come and offer their heads, and so on. It was with great reluctance that I had to conclude this essay. I did so only because the examiner was standing beside me, indicating the time was over, and he was ready to collect the paper. I was not allowed to write any more, but I knew I could have.

With everyone else, I waited anxiously for the results. I need not have worried.

Would you be surprised to learn that, in Punjabi, I scored the maximum marks? I was even amazed myself! Listening to that divine guidance paid off!

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Prayer for My Father

Despite that guidance, my first truly faith inspiring experience happened when I was in the middle of the third year of my undergraduate course work. As I mentioned earlier, my father had been suffering from many physical and emotional problems since my early childhood. By this time, problems with my step brothers had been settled, they had moved to other places, and we were renting out some vacant portions of our house. Even my two older full brothers were living in different cities in connection with their jobs. It was only me, my old mother, and my sick, old father who lived in the house.

One day, my mother told me that my father appeared in much worse shape than before and asked me to go and fetch the best doctor in town. I went and requested Dr. Bawa, the senior most physician of Rajindera Government Hospital, to come and examine my father.

“Daljit,” Dr. Bawa took me aside after his examination. “I have thoroughly examined your father, and find that he is in no immediate danger. But, since he is an old man in his eighties, and has suffered with these physical ailments and emotional trauma for quite a long time, he may not last more than three or six months. I don’t have my

prescription pad with me, but you can come to my home after an hour. If I've not left on another call, I will give you a prescription for him."

This mixed message of my father being in no immediate danger, but with possible imminent death in the next six months, shook my entire emotional being. I immediately ran to the *Guru Granth Sahib* room, and with folded hands, I started to pray and address Guru Ji in the following words:

"Oh, Guru Ji, I do recognize that everybody including my father has to die one day. But my problem is that, being the youngest child, I have never ever realized my duty towards my parents. I have always been under the impression that my job was to study hard, do good in school, play with other kids, and just be a good obedient child. As for serving my parents, or taking care of their medical needs, my elder brothers or other relatives and friends were always around to do that. But now, I am the only responsible male member in the house, and this is my first serious opportunity to serve my father." I didn't know what to do.

"Oh, Guru Ji," I continued. "Six months is too short a period to get really ready, as well as meaningfully serve my father. **Please give me at least three years**, so that I may be able to serve him to my full satisfaction. **If these three years are not available in my father's life, then please take these years from my life, but please do give me at least this much time to serve him.**" As soon as I said these words, a strange icy cool wave vertically ran through the middle of my chest, and I thought that my prayer had been accepted.

"I will go to the doctor three times," I told myself, just to make sure if my prayer is answered or not. "I will go at one-hour intervals

to get the prescription. If all the three times I miss the doctor, for one reason or another, I will assume that there is no need of the medicine and my father would recover on his own.” So, that is what I did.

I went to the doctor three times, and every time I was told that he had just left for an urgent call from the hospital. That was my confirmation.

Yet, still being not sure, I went to see the doctor for a fourth time. This time he was there and wrote out the prescription. I bought the medicine, but did not take care to truly administer the medicine in time or regularly. Despite that, my father started recovering rapidly.

In the end, my father survived not just for three years, but six! I know my prayers were answered!

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Admission in Engineering

Both my friend Gian and I graduated from Arts College in 1956 with majors in Math and we both scored a first division (equivalent to an A grade). That same year, with the cooperation of Patiala state authorities, and Karam Chand Thapar, a local industrialist, an engineering college was opened in our city and started to hold classes. This was a God-send for people like us who could not afford to go to a different city and bear the housing expenses in addition to the tuition. Moreover, due to tough competition for only forty seats open for the entire state, plus some reserved seats, even with a first division, our chances for acceptance in the only existing engineering

college in the state at Chandigarh were very slim. But, we would try.

So, both Gian and I applied for admission in the Civil Engineering category in Patiala. Perhaps. Because I had secured fewer marks in my undergraduate degree, or did not do well in my Interview, my name was not on the list of selected candidates. My friend Gian was selected. It was not only a big disappointment for me not getting in, but also very disheartening for Gian. He immediately started feeling lonely.

As for myself, in addition to praying and bowing before *Guru Granth Sahib* again and again, I started looking for some personal references to help me. Rumor had it that a supplementary list of ten more candidates accepted for admission was going to be released any day. One evening, when I was walking around dejected in the courtyard of my home, my friend Gian walked in. He conveyed the good news that the supplementary list of accepted candidates had been put on the college notice board. On the list there was the name "Dalip Singh." He didn't know anyone named Dalip. That was not my name, "Daljit Singh," but it was so close he didn't know whether it might be a typing mistake, or another actual person. My inner voice said, 'it is me.'

The next morning I went to the college administration office to ask. The clerk confirmed that indeed there was a typing mistake in the new list. My name was intended. He gladly accepted my first-year admission fee.

When I went around conveying the good news to my friends and relatives, I began to be curious about how all this had happened. I found that one of the references I had approached was S. Ishar Singh Mardan, a popular attorney in Patiala. His daughter was married to a cousin of mine. He was an old friend of my father and had a great

regard for him. His older son also was an attorney and had a very charming personality. He had approached one of the people higher up in the Engineering College, and recommended both my name, and one other relative of his. Ultimately, they agreed to accept one of his recommendations, and asked him to choose one. Inexplicably, he chose me.

To me, it must be God who arranged this. By chance I asked him for a reference and he, amazingly, choose my name for acceptance rather than his own, closer relative. I am eternally thankful to God for this favor.

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God Saves My Career

Without a doubt, I felt very happy about my acceptance into the Engineering College. I wore my best clothes to attend classes. Gian and I cycled together to and from college. Soon though, I found that, unlike the undergraduate studies, the Engineering studies were no cake walk. We had classes from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., with so much homework that often we had to work till midnight, sometimes even beyond that, to complete our assignments. There was hardly any time to go over and digest what had been covered by the teachers during the day. Another unfortunate thing was that most of our teachers had essentially no teaching experience. They had just graduated from different engineering colleges from other places in India, and were not at all familiar with the system under which we

were to be examined. As a result, they were frantically trying to cover whatever was listed in the syllabus.

Before the teachers even started the last chapters in our syllabus, we learned that our final annual exams were going to be held just in three weeks! In this time we had to study and prepare for the exam in addition to our regular class work. This included going over everything we had been taught during the year. We also had to complete and submit all of the homework assigned to us during the year by all of our teachers. We would be graded individually for our homework, written exam, and oral exam. We were required to obtain at least 60% in the home work, and oral exams, and had to obtain 40% in each group of one or two subjects. The written exam was the most difficult. Not only did we have to cover a vast amount of material, but also neither we nor our teachers knew who would be setting the examination papers, or what kinds of questions to expect.

When the results of the exams were announced, only 20% of the students passed. Both Gian and I were among the 80% who failed. Naturally it was a big disappointment and shock to both our families. It was hard for us to imagine a failure in any exam when all of our previous school career was filled with mostly first divisions, and even first positions among our classmates.

There was not much time to lament over the present failure. In about one month there would be a supplementary exam. It was our last chance! If we did not pass it, we would lose a year and have to start all over, or even be kicked out of the engineering college altogether.

“Oh, Guru Ji,” I once again went before *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, before beginning my preparation for the supplementary exam, and said. “Please help me and guide me. If you don’t want me to be an

engineer, then please give me some indication regarding that. If you want me to be an engineer, please guide me how to study and prepare for that. The syllabus is so vast and unpredictable that even if I keep studying for most of the day, I cannot cover it all, nor be sure I had covered all the relevant topics. I will first go on retreat to Golden Temple Amritsar and stay there for ten days. I hope to get some sign from you regarding choosing a different career, or guidance regarding preparing for the exam.”

I went to Amritsar and stayed with S. Uttam Singh, a distant cousin of mine. Daily I visited Golden Temple but did not get any guidance either way. Sadly, I returned home and started to prepare for the supplementary exam. One thing I did different this time was, instead of just going over our course books, I went and borrowed class notes from a Chandigarh student who had already taken the same exam and passed. To my surprise, I found that many of the questions in our examination papers were covered in these notes. This meant that the examination papers were generally set by the Chandigarh professors, and they had made sure that their students were well prepared for such questions.

Another God-send came to me when our neighbor’s sister, with whom we had long family relations, came to visit her brother. She also came to greet our family. Her son, who had taken the engineering exam the same year, but was from Ludhiana, had comfortably passed. So, I asked her, how and for how long, did her son study when he was preparing for this final exam. She told me that he was never so serious like me. Every day he would rise about 6:00 a.m., go for a walk, come back to study for two hours, then take his shower and eat breakfast. He then would study for another two hours, take a break to have some fun with his sister, or chit chat with

other members of the family. He would then have lunch, and take an afternoon nap. When he woke from that, he would then go out for evening hockey, come back, have dinner, then study for another couple of hours before going to sleep. This was a very different schedule from one I followed.

This was perhaps God's answer regarding the way I needed to set up my daily schedule and study. So, I created a daily timetable of morning and evening walks, two-hour study times, spaced with two-hour breaks for meals, daily chores or relaxation. I stuck to this schedule so strictly that if Gian and I would go together for an evening walk, as soon as I noticed it was time to return home to resume my studies, I would retrace my steps there and then. I did this even if Gian would insist on going further. The end result was that I easily passed the supplementary exam, and thus God saved my Engineering career. Unfortunately, Gian failed once again, and our career paths separated from there on.

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My First Job

After going through some more setbacks, including a failure in the second year, perhaps due to my incurable chronic cold and not sticking to a healthy time schedule, I ultimately did complete my engineering studies. On July 9, 1961 I learned that I had passed the final exam. That same night I boarded a train to Delhi, and early the next morning I knocked on the door of Sir Sobha Singh, a big

influential contractor, and an old friend of my father. He gave me a letter of recommendation addressed to S. Manmohan Singh, franchise holder of Coca Cola in India. He was then building the new American embassy in Delhi.

With his letter, I then boarded a bus to Connaught Place, where I hoped to meet his chief engineer. After looking at my reference letter, the chief engineer asked me to come and see him again, bringing all my credentials. The next day, while carrying my testimonials, I was sitting in the bus going to Connaught place when I heard a couple of guys talking about some interviews. Being curious, I asked them what kinds of interviews they were talking about.

They told me that there were going to be some interviews that day for several engineer and overseer (sub engineers) positions in the newly created Central Department of Border Roads. This naturally raised my interest even further, so I asked them where these interviews were going to be held. They said they would take place in Kashmir House.

“Which bus goes there?” I then asked.

“This one we’re on now,” they answered.

I immediately decided to postpone seeing the chief engineer at Connaught Place to some other day and kept riding the bus until it reached Kashmir House.

Outside the gate, I saw a long queue of young people who were waiting. A few would leave to talk with an army soldier who was holding a gun. After hearing some angry response from him, they would return to the queue. This made me very nervous, but I was determined to try for one of these positions. When it finally came my turn, with trembling hands, I also approached the soldier. I showed him my provisional certificate which showed that I had passed the

four-year Engineering program. Immediately upon reading this letter, he acted very pleased and smiled.

“Can you come back for an interview after lunch?” He asked.
I said I could.

When I returned after lunchtime, a funny thing happened. I saw that same soldier directing young men towards a big queue, but when I approached him, he told me to go and join another young man standing by himself under a tree. I was puzzled. I didn't understand and thought that somehow the soldier did not want to give me the chance for an interview for one of these jobs. Finding an opportunity when he wasn't looking, I sneaked into the big queue.

“Gentleman,” the soldier came and addressed me. “I asked you to stand with that other young man by himself. The queue here is for overseers, but you are an engineer. Unless you want to become an overseer, you should be interviewed by different officers.”

I sheepishly went back and joined the other young engineer.

Our first interview was with Col. B.B Chander, a tall, slim, middle-aged man, with a big bushy moustache.

“I don't know how they came, maybe they jumped from heaven,” I heard him say into the phone when I entered his room. After ending his phone call, he quickly asked me a few preliminary questions, then asked me to go upstairs for an interview with his boss.

I felt really nervous. Would this officer (rank SO 1) ask me some really tough technical questions? But, like Col. BB Chander, we exchanged a few pleasantries, then he looked at me.

“You can go.” He said, and I left the room.

Once outside, I wondered what he might have meant, so I returned.

“Sir,” I sheepishly asked. “What's next?”

“What’s next?” He quickly retorted. “Go and join the job tomorrow, what else!”

Hearing this answer, I was very pleasantly surprised, and immediately left Kashmir House to catch a bus. I managed to get on the last bus to South Patel Nagar. That’s where I was staying with a cousin of mine.

On the way, I happened to again meet one of the young men who had told me about this opportunity. I invited him to a nice restaurant in Connaught Place for tea. There, I asked him to order the sweets of his choice, then I bought some more sweets for my cousin’s family. In my excitement, I didn’t realize I spent all the money I had. Back at my cousin’s, I had to borrow five Rupees from my cousin for my railway fare back home to Patiala!

I had to return to Delhi to finalize the paperwork for my new job. A medical exam was also required. Back at Kashmir House, the head clerk, Mr. Khanna, prepared the papers for my assignment to a post somewhere in Himalayas along the India-China boarder. In this process he asked me to accompany him to see Col. B.B. Chander for his approval.

“No!” Col. Chander said angrily when he saw the assignment location. “I want him here, in New Delhi, at headquarters, along with the seven other new engineers.”

That settled that!

So, just eight days after passing my engineering course, I had a new job in the capital! While my classmates and friends, who had scored much higher grades than mine, were going from one interview to another for many weeks, I already had a job! This must have been by God’s grace, and His perfect plan. Why else would I have ridden on that very bus, at that very moment, when those two

young men were talking about an opportunity for engineers. Then getting me posted right in the capital of India, rather than some remote and extremely cold area on the Indo-Chinese border! I can only consider it was a series of miracles by God's special grace!

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Saved from A 2000 Feet Fall

When I started the Border Roads job, I first stayed with a distant cousin of mine for a few days. Then, I rented a room in Rajinder Nagar Delhi. After a time, I wanted more space, so I moved to a room on the top floor of a nice family home in S. Patel Nagar. By this time, many of my friends and classmates came to know about this room of mine, and whenever they would happen to come to Delhi in connection with a job interview or other business in the India's capital, they would come and stay with me. Sometimes they didn't let me know ahead of time. I managed to handle these surprises!

After a couple of months living there, my two close friends, Manohar Singh Chawla, and Harbhajan Singh Sahni, got good jobs in Military Engineering Service (M.E.S) of India, and we started sharing that room as equal partners. We had a wonderful time together, both at home and the office. Sahni's office was in the same Kashmir House, where I worked.

However, just after four months, I also got a job in M.E.S. This was a permanent department, while Border Roads had been opened

as a temporary department just that year. Therefore, I resigned from Border Roads, and joined M.E.S. at its Pathankot office in Punjab. There, I was a S.D.O. Technical (Or technical personal assistant to the Garrison Engineer or G.E).

The Garrison Engineer was a six foot tall, hefty man with two broken front teeth. Strangely, he was lacking any formal education. He had risen from labor ranks to this G. E post. However, he had such a keen sense of observation and expertise that, no matter from what section, whether accounts, contracts, or engineering, anybody could take any document or estimate to him for approval, he would find the slightest mistake, even if it was in one remote corner of that document. This was an asset, but he would then shout at the employee and demoralize him so much that often that person would come out of his office almost crying.

While working in this environment, I was once deputed to go to Dalhousie (a hill station near Pathankot), to make a new water supply plan for the military station there. The water source chosen was a small creek called Karelu Nala. It started high up in the hills and flowed down near the Military cantonment.

The first thing I did was to hire some laborers and asked them to chain-measure the distance from the source to the intended supply station, while going down along the slope of the hillside. After a couple of days, I asked the local overseer to accompany me to the place where the laborers would be working that day. He went with me up to a certain spot on the hilly road. There, he indicated that the laborers should be somewhere down below, and returned to his office leaving me alone.

On my own, I began to climb down the hill. I followed the mountain paths I could find. Sometimes I even jumped down to the

terraces below. I went quite a way down, but at one point, when I was looking for a suitable path or a place to proceed further down, I observed that the only way down was a dried-out drain covered with gravel and stones. Finding no other alternative, I proceeded down this path. **I didn't know that because of water flowing down this path during the rain, these stones had become slippery. As soon as I put my foot on the first top stone, I fell down flat on it. I grabbed to steady myself and found that my right hand was holding onto a small bush at my back. The tip of the umbrella I carried in my left hand was stuck against a small crevice in that big flat stone I'd fallen on. These two kept me from falling any further. Below me was a 2000 foot deep ditch!**

This is how God had saved me from a deadly fall down into that deep ditch!

After regaining my senses, I managed to get up off the slippery stone, and started looking for some other way to go further down and join my laborers. I could see no other way, so I tried to go down that path again. This time, I was extra cautious and retraced my footing as soon as I noticed when it began to slip. I made no progress. Eventually, I decided to go back up. But when I looked up, I was surprised to see no path where I'd come down. I marveled that I had managed to come so far down the hill!

At this point, I began to panic! It was getting dark. I was alone, on the side of this mountain. I could neither go up, nor down, and in the night, who knew what kind of wild, even vicious animals might be roaming around!

I started praying, calling my mom for assistance, and yelling for my laborers as loud as I could. Luckily one of the laborers heard my voice. He said for me to come and join them.

I shouted back that I was in no position to join them. They had to come and find me. After a few minutes they came to where I was and said for me to follow them up the hill. I was so shaken by the experience that one of them had to hold my hand and slowly accompany and guide me up the hill to the road.

I will never forget that experience for as long as I live!

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A Sagacious Wife

After working a few years for M.E.S., I got a job in the Punjab Irrigation Department. Upon completion of my training period, I was posted in Ambala. While searching for a place to rent, I came across a house near my office, where I was told there was a two-room portion available for rent. I knocked at the door at the boundary wall of the courtyard. A young girl came out.

“I’m an S.D.O. (Sub Divisional Officer) here,” I told her. “I’m looking for a house to rent, and have been told you have a portion of this house available.”

Without saying anything, she shyly smiled, and went back to the inside of her house. Soon a middle-aged lady came out.

“Yes, boy,” she said to me. “My daughter told me that you are an S.D.O. here and are interested in renting the vacant portion in our house. We do have a two-room part, with independent kitchen and bath room available. All of it goes for a monthly rent of Rs. 50. But before we go into further details, tell us, besides you – who else

would be living here with you?” She stared at me. “Or, will you be alone?”

“At present, I am single,” I answered. “I would request my mother to come and live with me, but I cannot force her to vacate her house in Patiala and move here. Could you possibly reduce the rent from Rs. 50 to Rs. 45 per month?”

“Listen, Kaakka (sonny),” she retorted sternly. “The rent will NOT be reduced from Rs. 50 to Rs. 45 per month. Regarding your mother, she has to come here first before you will even be allowed to put your foot in our house.”

Hearing this kind of a terse and stern reply, I immediately concluded that these people are too conservative and too tough to deal with. I decided I’d better look for some other place to rent. So, I ended the conversation and went looking for another two-room suite in the same area; hopefully one where the landlord was more friendly and easier to deal with.

Also, at this time, at the office, I was looking through matrimonial ads in the newspaper, as well as asking people I knew regarding a prospective wife. In this process, the head clerk of our division suggested to me a girl living very close to my office. He arranged for a personal meeting with her and her family. After a couple of days, one evening my mother and I went to their house for an formal interview.

The girl’s mother greeted us, and started praising her daughter, how smart she was, and what good habits she had, etc. After a few minutes the girl came out with tea and some snacks and began to offer them to us with a great smile and style. While doing so, she was speaking English very fast. I could not even talk in my local Punjabi as fast.

I could tell from my mother's facial expression that she was really impressed by this girl's manners. I knew my mother was ready to agree to our marriage right then.

"Before we talk about other things," I said to the girl. "I want to make one thing very clear. I am the youngest son. After my marriage I expect that my mother would live with me/us for the rest of her life. Please let me know if that would be okay with you?"

"What would we need to speak about doing this later?" The girl asked, then proceeded to embrace my mother. "Why she doesn't move right now with us here and forever?"

Naturally, this kind of a response immediately won us over. We were very impressed.

"I also want to make one thing clear," the girl added. "I am a very social girl. I have a lot of friends. Even now, while I am talking to you, a boy friend of mine is waiting for me to go to a movie together. Will that be okay with you?"

In those days, in the sixties, in India, boys and girls were generally not supposed to mix or watch movies together. I was quite surprised by this remark from the girl, but wanted to show my openness and understanding.

"It is okay to be social and have friends,.." I replied. "But when this social conduct crosses certain limits, then it is not desirable."

"Of course, it has to be within desirable limits," the girl responded. As soon as she said that, she went outside where her friend was waiting in his car.

Concluding the interview, my mother conveyed her approval to the girl's mother, but I had some reservations.

"Although from my side it is also a tentative 'yes,'" I said. "I still have to check with my elder brother, who is like my father. Then we

will convey to you our final ‘yes’ after talking with him. I need his opinion.”

That evening I talked about this meeting with a friend of mine who was staying with me.

“I knew about your visit to this girl’s house,” he said. “It surprised me that you would be interested in a girl who has such a bad reputation.”

“What?” I asked. “I didn’t know about any bad reputation. I’ve even given a tentative agreement to our marrying.”

My friend became silent, then offered to double check with a professor, who knew her, in the college where the girl had been studying recently.

“Daljit,” he said to me the next evening. “I went to the professor who knows the girl. I told about you, and mentioned that you were in serious talks with this girl for matrimony.

“Go and tell your friend that this girl is not suitable for him,” the professor immediately said.

Hearing this, I felt very confused. What do I do now? Do I proceed with the possibility of marriage? Or, do I send a polite diplomatic message of my disapproval?

I had previously been seeing other girls, and I had broken off those relationships. I’m sure I had broken their hearts, and did not wish to do that again. But, if this girl had a bad reputation, did I want to continue with her?

I struggled in my mind about this matter. I prayed that somebody would come and assure me that this talk about the girl’s character were false rumors, and I could proceed further in the matter without any reservations. Marriage was a serious matter, I didn’t want to have any regrets.

Then one night, I had a dream in which I saw myself walking together with this girl. Many street urchins are chasing us, and shouting many obscene remarks. In my rage, I began throwing stones at them and cursing them loudly. Then I woke up and started thinking. ‘If I went ahead and married this girl, and people started to say such obscene remarks, how would I cope with that situation. How many people could I throw stones at?’

Perhaps this dream was God’s answer to my quandary. I immediately composed and mailed a nice polite letter to the girl’s mother. In the letter I basically said that my elder brother did not approve this proposal. Therefore, I could not proceed further. I didn’t explain more than that.

“Good riddance!” My friend exclaimed when I told him about this decision. “If you want to marry a really nice girl, with an excellent reputation and a good family background, then you should marry one of the girls in that family who refused to rent their house to you.”

In those days, in the sixties, a young man did not simply knock at somebody's house, and say, ‘Here I am. I’ve come to propose to your daughter.’ Generally, it had to be the girl’s parents who would initiate the talks with the boy’s parents. Only after their mutual agreement was the boy informed about the proposal.

While I was thinking about the ways to approach this family through some mediator, I received a letter in response to a matrimonial advertisement I had put in a newspaper. It was from the family of the girl I wanted to contact! The oldest brother of the girl who lived in the house I’d earlier tried to rent part of had written. The letter said the family had read my matrimonial ad, and would like to meet me regarding the proposal for his sister.

She had recently completed her Master's degree, and had all the good qualities I was looking for, such as nice civilized manners, expertise in household matters, and maintaining relationships.

For me this was a God-send. I immediately wrote back that I would like to hold further talks with them. After a few days, the girl's brother and mother (who had refused to rent me her house), came to see me at my place. The girl's brother started asking me very tough questions, as if he was interviewing me for a job. I replied to all his questions very candidly, and even conveyed my weakest points, such as a divorce in the family, and a court case with my step brothers (such things were considered a big stigma in those days, and generally people would avoid forming relations with such families).

After a grueling, maybe forty-five minute interview, the girl's brother and mother stood up, said they would think about the matter and, in a few days, would convey their desire to me if they wanted to proceed further or not.

"S. Daljit Singh Ji," a man began when I answered the phone a couple weeks later. "You must remember that my mother and I came to your house a few weeks ago to speak about a marriage proposal with my younger sister. You said you would let us know if you would like to proceed further, but we've not heard from you."

"If I remember correctly," I replied. "It was you who were going to contact me about whether we could proceed."

"Okay. What difference does it make?" He conceded since my memory seemed better than his. "In any case, we would like to proceed in this matter and want to know what you desire."

"I, too, would like to proceed," I replied. "But it is my mother and older brother who will make the final decision."

He understood and we agreed that the next Sunday my mother and brother would visit the girl's home. If they were satisfied, and his family was satisfied, then I would be invited back to have a face to face interview with the girl and finalize the proposal of marriage.

Although this was a very positive development, yet I thought that if, for some reason, this girl did not appeal to me, I did not want to disappoint her. I shared these thoughts with my friend, and asked him to devise some way in which, without letting her know, I could see the girl before the formal interview. He remembered that the girl was working as a volunteer in the college library.

We decided that the next day both of us would go to the library. He would ask the girl for help in checking out some book, and I would stealthily glance at her from the nearby newspaper stand. Luckily, this friend of mine was a chubby boy with a great sense of humor. He would often make funny remarks about different situations and could generate a conversation. While he was talking with the girl, I was looking at her from behind a large newspaper which I held in front of me and pretended to read.

During this conversation, my friend made some really funny remark. It was so funny even such a shy girl couldn't control her smile. It was so endearing and charming that she won over my heart right then and there!

The next Sunday my mother and brother visited her family, approved the match, and settled a tentative date for the marriage a month later. Then, I was left alone to go to the girl's house and finalize the details. After exchanging some pleasantries with the parents and the girl, I asked for a token of our agreement. In response, they gave me a box of sweets and a gold British pound. This money held more status than common Rupees.

“Listen ‘Kaakka,’” the girl’s mother then said sternly to me. “After marriage you can take the girl along with you wherever you want, but before marriage don’t even try to ask her to go out with you!”

“I wouldn’t think of it,” I replied. “I won’t even walk past your house.”

That satisfied her mother. I returned to my house feeling overjoyed, and so thankful to God for blessing me with such a well reputed, highly educated, and sober sincere wife.

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An Embezzlement Charge

After our marriage in May 1965, at my urging, my wife started applying for jobs. Soon, she was offered a state job as a lecturer in Hindi, a major language of India. She was also asked to join the government college for women in Amritsar, the holiest Sikh city. Unfortunately, there had just been a war between India and Pakistan. Amritsar is right on the border. With its location between the two still hostile countries, my wife did not feel safe to be there. She decided not to go there, instead of refusing she asked for an extension then another and another. After a couple of extensions, she was given a final notice that either she join the college at Dharmsala, a distant hill station, within two days, or lose the job offer. She had no choice but to catch the first available bus and rush to Dharmsala.

This happened in late September, and soon both of us started feeling pangs of separation. Unfortunately, there was no government college in Ambala where we lived where she could teach, and there was no Irrigation subdivision at Dharmsala where I could work. This meant there was no possibility of us both getting posted at the same location. So, whenever there was a long week end, or possibility of taking any vacation, either she or I would make the long bus journey in order to have a day together.

The next March, which marked the general transfer season in government jobs, I went to see my chief engineer, and presented him a list of twenty-two cities in the state where there were both – an Irrigation sub division, where I could work, and also a government college where my wife could teach. I requested him to transfer me to any of these places, so that my wife could try to get herself transferred with me. Seeing this was a sincere and viable request, the chief engineer issued orders for my transfer to a running canal subdivision, at Nabha, a small town, 16 miles from my birth place Patiala. Even though the previous S.D.O. tried using political pressure to get this posting cancelled, the chief engineer did not change his mind.

I assumed the charge of this place on April 1, 1966 and started to try to obtain a transfer for my wife's to the same place. However, she could not get a posting at Nabha. Instead, she got transferred to Government Mohindra College – Patiala. It was close, but it meant a daily bus commute. Since I was already settled in Nabha, it was logical for her to make the commute. It was only a sixteen-mile journey by bus, but it was bothersome.

I found running this canal subdivision very strenuous. Because, even though it was the smallest subdivision in the circle, it had a

long tradition of corruption, bribery, and lawsuits with contractors. One of these contractors was the father of a classmate and close friend of mine. I decided to remain honest and aboveboard, and work without any prejudice against anybody.

Naturally, I soon became an obstacle in the path of many subordinates, the circle and division clerks, and even contractors in the area. They all depended on the corrupt money flowing through my sub division. At one point, I ended up filing a criminal report against the contractor who was the father of my close friend. A few days later, while visiting the Superintending Engineers office and talking to the S.D.O. of the adjoining subdivision, the Accounts clerks of our Executive engineer and Superintending Engineer approached us.

“We’ll be visiting your office in Nabha,” they told me.

“You will be most welcome,” I replied.

“S.D.O. *Sahib*, being new, you don’t know that there is a *fee* (bribe) attached with the inspection,” they said. “And its normal rate is Rs. 100.”

“You know I don’t take any *commission* (bribe),” I replied. “My official pay is only Rs. 300 per month. I couldn’t afford anything other than offering you a cup of tea and some refreshments.”

“We know you are absolutely honest,” they replied. “And you don’t take any *commission*, but your overseers, and revenue clerks do, so you have to ask them.”

“I will check with them,” I replied.

They repeated this to my colleague, an older person, experienced in these matters.

“No problem,” he said to them. “I’ve always been getting good service from my clients, and will serve you, according to the normal

practice.” Meaning, he has been accepting bribes and would have no problem paying them their normal bribe.

When I returned to my subdivision, I consulted my overseers and clerks about this matter. They informed me that the normal practice in such matters was that Rs. 100, or any other demand from a higher office, would be paid to the divisional clerk. A bill for Rs. 400 for false earthwork would be prepared. On this, the S.D.O. would have to show his 100 % verification (instead of normal 15%). Out of the Rs. 400, Rs. 100 would each go to the divisional clerk (for preparing the false bill), Rs. 100 to the overseer (who would enter the details of the bill in his measurement book), and Rs. 100 to the contractor (in whose name this bill is prepared). The last Rs. 100 would go to the S.D.O. If the S.D.O. didn't want his share, then the clerk and the overseer would be delighted to divide it among themselves.

This was abhorrent to me! Even to imagine becoming a partner in such a scheme was repellent. This would cause the government to pay four times the money to satisfy the illegal demand of a divisional clerk, and I would have to take 100 % of the responsibility for this bogus bill on myself!

Instead, I conveyed my inability to pay any “fee” to the Divisional and Circle accountants.

After a few days, they came for inspection. They first started with my colleague's subdivision. Even though his subdivision was three times larger than mine, and had many projects going on, they finished their inspection in just one day (probably because they were well served, entertained, and were promptly paid their due *fees*). When they came to my office, they repeatedly kept looking into all of my files and cash account books for three days, trying to find some mistakes or oversights. Ultimately on the third day, they came

to me showing me my cash account book open to a certain page..

“S.D.O. *Sahib*,” they said. “We will still give you the opportunity to pay our “fee” which is a long-established policy or be prepared to face an embezzlement charge.”

“Will you explain?” I asked.

“Look here,” they said. “You were sent Rs. 23.66 from the divisional office for distribution to your *beldars* (permanent laborers). But you entered only Rs 23.00 in your cash register. In this way, you embezzled RS. 0.66 of government money. You know that embezzlement, whether for Rs. 66, 000 or for Rs. 0.66, is a very serious crime. **A minimum punishment for this is dismissal from government service.**”

I still refused their demand. But, I became very worried. I thought of different ways I could deal with this situation, even including offering them the bribe, but only after first informing the police. But my conscious would not let me do such a thing. After a few days, these people reported the matter to the Superintending Engineer (S.E) and recommended my immediate suspension.

Before taking action, the Superintending Engineer forwarded the case to my Divisional Engineer (X. En) to look into this matter and report back to him. After a week, the X. En. asked me and the divisional accountant to bring him our cash registers. He, then, carefully looked at the entries in both the registers.

“**Look here, on your register,**” he addressed the accountant after just a few minutes. “**This entry showing a transfer of Rs 23.66 is “doctored.” It is clear that originally this entry was written for Rs 23.00. Later on, it was modified to look like Rs. 23.66. Unfortunately for you, you forgot to use the same ink or the same pen. This is a clear case of trying to harass an honest person.**”

The accountant had no defense and started to pass the blame on to his assistant. For this, the X. En., severely admonished him.

“Go,” the X. En. said to me. “You can sleep in peace. You are not to blame for this.”

I went back to my home, feeling so relieved and thankful to God for this deliverance from a charge of embezzlement that could have cost me my job.

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A Bribery Charge

As stated earlier, the entire atmosphere of this job was replete with corruption, bribery, and scandals. It appeared that everybody there was trying to make more and more money, using all kinds of immoral, illegal, and corrupt methods. They did not care for the proper maintenance of the irrigation canals, or the welfare of the farmers, who depended on the water provided by the canals. The entire system was so bad that many times my colleagues and contractors would lecture me to forsake my attempts to remain honest, and not be an obstacle in the way of others doing things their normal, though illegal, way. Otherwise, I would invite trouble for me and my family.

It did not take much time for this trouble to arise. It was later revealed that, at the behest of an official from the divisional office, an article in the local newspaper appeared stating that a certain bridge on a canal under my jurisdiction needed urgent repairs. Many

of the wooden “sleepers” on the deck of the bridge needed replacement. If the necessary action was not taken immediately it could cause a serious accident and endanger the many lives of those who daily traveled in buses passing over this bridge.

I deputed the overseer in charge of this bridge to prepare a local purchase order for the number of sleepers needing replacement. He was also to get the purchase approved from the Executive Engineer. After a few days, probably on a Saturday, he came to my house with the approved local purchase for about thirty wooden sleepers and asked me to accompany him to a local shopkeeper and select the sleepers.

Normally, I wouldn't need to accompany him, but in my desire to make sure that he would not accept some rotten, or defective sleepers, with knots or cracks in them, I agreed to go with him. The shopkeeper took us to the back of the store and, pointing towards one particular stack of sleepers, asked us to pick any sleepers out of the stack. Both myself and the overseer started picking the best-looking sleepers, which were free from any knots, cracks, or any sign of a rot, etc. As an extra caution, to ensure that these sleepers would not be changed after I had left the shop, or on the way to the bridge site, I initialed each and every selected sleeper with a piece of chalk.

After this purchase, and at the request of our Superintending Engineer, I went on three weeks' vacation. This was to accommodate another colleague of mine, as well as take care of my wife who was pregnant with our first baby. After a couple of weeks, I was called back to participate in an enquiry regarding one of my overseers, against whom I had earlier made a report for absence from duty. On the way there, I happened to pass near the bridge where the

sleepers I had purchased earlier were being laid. They were being covered on top with coal tar from above. Just to make sure the work was being done properly, I stopped for a few minutes, satisfied myself about the quality of work, and then proceeded to the office. The proceedings there went without incident.

At the end of my vacation I returned to work at my office.

“Sir,” my clerk and the sectional officer came to me and very innocently asked. “Since you happened to inspect the work on the bridge when the old sleepers were replaced by new ones, could you please sign the payroll as a mark of your inspection.”

I didn’t see any harm in doing that, and readily signed it. Soon after that, the whole atmosphere in my subdivision changed, as if all hell had broken loose. First, I started receiving suppressed hints from divisional clerks, and overseers from other subdivisions. Then came a suggestion to check the statements made by a certain contractor against my work on the bridge. Then one day that contractor himself came to me.

“S.D.O. Sahib,” he said. “I need to be paid for the earthwork job I did during the time of a previous S.D.O. I’ve been waiting patiently for so long, but I cannot wait any more.”

I asked him to wait a moment, then asked the overseer in charge of the area where this work was claimed to have been done.

“That contractor is making a bogus claim,” the overseer said. “He just wants to blackmail us.” With this information, I returned to the contractor.

“Will you please show me proof that you did this work,” I asked the contractor.

“It is now so long ago,” the contractor replied. “That I can’t prove it, but I did the work,” he insisted. “Either you pay me for this work,

or I will report that the wooden sleepers which you replaced on the bridge are from Cheel wood instead of Dyar wood. And everybody knows that Cheel wood is very weak as compared to Dyar, and is roughly half the price. You have personally gone and selected these sleepers, have initialed each and every one of them, and even inspected when these sleepers were being laid on the bridge.

“Now either you pay me for my work,” he continued. “Or I will report to higher authorities that you, along with your overseer have accepted big bribes by purchasing sleepers of substandard wood and have also jeopardized the safety of many passengers who will be travelling on public buses and private cars on that bridge.”

When the contractor finally left, I realized that, even though I had tried my level best to ensure that the sleepers were not rotten, or full of cracks and knots, and the work was done properly, I had not imagined that the shopkeeper would pass on Cheel sleepers, as Dyar wood. I further realized that, now, all those precautions which I had taken, such as initialing each and every sleeper, and even inspecting the work during my vacation, had become like a noose for my neck, leaving no argument for me to defend myself. It would appear as if I had selected and approved the inferior wood!

I began running from pillar to post so to speak, from one accountant to another, one attorney to another, for help. Finding no way out except to succumb to the blackmail of the contractor and pay for his alleged claim, I asked the overseer and the S.D.C. (sub-divisional clerk) to prepare a purchase order and bring it to me for my signature.

The next day, around lunch time, the S.D.C. brought the purchase order along with the necessary measurement books and placed it on my desk. After making sure the calculations were alright, and other

necessary formalities had been completed, I took out my pen, and started to put my signature on the bogus purchase order. **Right at that moment, a sort of dream-like experience occurred, in which Guru Gobind Singh Ji said to me, ‘Daljit, for all the mistakes, which you made unknowingly, it is my duty to save you, but any mistake you make knowingly, for that you are on your own.’**

Realizing this clear warning from my Guru, I immediately dropped my pen, stood up, and walked out of the office.

“Do whatever you want,” I said to the contractor. “I refuse to sign a bogus purchase order.”

As I expected, the contractor filed a complaint against me and the overseer with the Superintending Engineer (S.E.). The S.E., then, ordered an immediate enquiry, and at one point even recommended my suspension to the chief engineer. But by God’s grace, perhaps knowing my good reputation for honesty, or some other compassionate consideration, the chief engineer did not agree. Instead, he sent the case back to the S.E to request my explanation. In the meantime, that S.E was replaced by another, who was a nice saintly honest person, and had originally approved the local purchase, as executive engineer. Ultimately the new S.E absolved me of all charges and closed the case. **Up to this day, I feel indebted to my Guru for saving me from knowingly committing a serious act of corruption to cover up a big mistake, even though it was committed unknowingly.**

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Transfer to Amritsar

While I was busy preparing my defense for the sleeper enquiry, contacting attorneys and other experts, many overseers and the revenue clerks found this a great opportunity to engage in more open corruption and tarnish my reputation. At about the same time, I had to deal with my wife going on early leave from work because of critical issues with her pregnancy. Eventually the baby, a boy, was safely born. Then, while my wife was in the hospital with a five-day old baby, someone with significant political influence got her transferred to Amritsar. By doing so, he could usurp her job in Patiala.

Now, I was fighting on three fronts. On one hand, I was attending the sleeper enquiries going to different officers and clerks for support and guidance. At the same time I was going to many places, meeting different officers and clerks trying to get my wife's transfer cancelled. And, I was trying to control the situation created by my subordinates who had even started to poison the ears of my boss, and had succeeded to the extent of causing him adopt a hostile attitude towards me.

After a continuous effort of travel between Nabha, Patiala, and Chandigarh, one Friday I succeeded in convincing the officers, and officials in the Education department to cancel my wife's transfer to Amritsar. They promised to issue the necessary orders the following Monday. I returned to my house in Nabha, with a sigh of relief. But God had different plans for me. That Sunday, I was peacefully enjoying relief from at least one main worry, when my colleague from the adjoining subdivision, came to my house. He was an old man in his late fifties, waiting to retire in a couple of years.

“Jawa Sahib,” he said when I asked for the purpose of his visit. “I have come to seek your help.”

“I myself, have been running from pillar to post,” I replied with a great sense of irony. “I’ve been seeking help from every corner. I wonder how could I be of any help to you?”

“At this time, beside God,” he answered. “You are the only person who can help me. I have seven daughters. Many of whom are of marriageable age. I have to find suitable matches for them. Because I’ve been working in this area almost all my life, all my connections are here. You know, how hard it is these days to find suitable matches for girls, even where you have many connections. But now, I’ve been transferred to Amritsar. I don’t know how difficult it will be to develop new connections, and find suitable matches for my daughters in an absolutely unfamiliar place. My replacement is already sitting in my office to take over the operation here. I have tapped all my political connections, but the chief engineer told me that the only solution for me is to find another S.D.O. of a nearby subdivision who is willing to go to Amritsar in my place. I’ve heard that your wife has been transferred to Amritsar. If you would agree to be transferred there, it would be a great favor to me.”

“S.D.O. Sahib,” I replied with regret. “I would have liked to help you, but just yesterday, I met with the officers and the officials in the education department. They are going to issue the cancellation of the transfer orders for my wife on Monday.”

I knew how important it was for him to remain in this area. In those days finding suitable matches for their daughters was the biggest worry of Indian parents. My own experience was not so far behind me.

“Well, the cancellation is still to be issued,” he answered in turn. “I will bear all the expenses if you could agree to go with me today to the homes of all those officials and ask them to cancel those orders for your wife. Then we can go to the residence of the chief engineer to transfer you to Amritsar in my place.”

Despite my own tiredness, I agreed. We then boarded a bus to Chandigarh. After knocking on many doors, including that of the Chief Engineer, on a hot summer Sunday, I returned to Nabha, and started preparing for Amritsar.

Unknown to us at the time, this transfer turned out to be a great boon for both of us. Instead of daily commuting from Nabha to Patiala by bus, my wife could walk to her college in Amritsar. It was within five minutes from the house we found to rent. As for me, I was now in charge of the Statistical Subdivision for keeping records and preparing maps of rainfall and groundwater levels in the state. There were no construction works, or revenue areas, and I did not have to deal with any corruption scandals, or corrupt officials.

On top of the peaceful work atmosphere, we were able to enjoy frequent visits to the Golden Temple in Amritsar, the Vatican for Sikhs. We developed many long-lasting friendships, and cherished memories in this holy city. Also, in time, God blessed me with my second son in this city. This was such a blessing from God.

Once settled in Amritsar, I went to the administration office of my wife’s previous college in Patiala to collect some arrears of her pay. There, I happened to meet the principal of the school who had issued my wife’s transfer to Amritsar while she was still in the hospital.

“Jawa Sahib,” he apologized. “I am so sorry for issuing those transfer orders for your wife, particularly when she had delivered a

baby, and was still in the hospital. But I was under a lot of political pressure.”

“Principal Sahib,” I replied. “You need not be sorry. I want to thank you for this transfer. Now we are in much better shape and enjoying a much more peaceful and easy life than before.”

To this day, I am thankful to God, who knew and always knows, what is best for me, and would place me where it is most suited for me. If not, I would have tried to live and stay in a place unsuitable and harmful to me.

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Foreign Assignment

After my transfer to Amritsar, by God’s grace, my wife and I started living our life with renewed peace, and happiness. We developed new friendships, and were often visiting or being visited by our colleagues and their families. That doesn’t mean that there were absolutely no problems.

Being in the Irrigation Department and being in charge of Statistical Subdivision with no other political or “financial” clout, I was often ridiculed or ignored by my colleagues. This became so extreme that when part of the roof of my home, rented government quarters, fell down into the house, nothing was done.

“Move to another house,” the S.D.O. in charge simply said instead of repairing it.

On top of this, the bridge enquiry was still going on.

I was still trying to approach higher officers to help me with this matter. In this pursuit, I came across a distant relative of my wife who was a friend of one of the chief engineers. This chief engineer called the S.E, one night, but he did not budge from his view against me. However, one evening, when my wife and I, and a relative of hers, were drinking tea together, her relative started looking at our hands, and making some calculations.

“After a year or so,” her relative said to me. “You will be blessed with another son, and you will soon be getting a job in a foreign country.”

“How would I be able to meet the expenses of travel?” I asked. “What kind of salary can I expect?”

“It looks like the Government will pay for the travel expenses, and your salary will be beyond your imagination,” he answered.

“Oh.” We were surprised.

“But I see one problem,” then he paused. “I don’t see your oldest son with you on this foreign assignment.”

My wife and I became alarmed after hearing his last remark. We were concerned for the safety of our son.

“Can you clarify what you mean about our son?” I asked him in concern.

“There seems to be no danger to his health,” he replied. “But, according to my calculations, during your foreign assignment, he may not accompany you, but may stay in India with some of your relatives, or somewhere else. If you are really worried, you may do daily reading of *Sukhmani Sahib* (one special hymn from *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*).”

We did this, not daily, but quite often.

After approximately a year, part of this prediction came true.

First, we were blessed with our second son. After another couple of years, the second part of his prediction also materialized.

In this time, oil producing countries formed a special alliance called “OPEC.” This resulted in high gas prices throughout the world. To lessen this impact, India entered into a special agreement with Iraq, a major oil producing country, according to which Iraq would provide oil to India at special discounted prices. In return, India would provide technical personnel to Iraq to help build important infrastructure. Eventually, I responded to an advertisement by the Foreign Assignment Section of India for engineers, and was the first person to be selected.

As a result, **in August 1973, I boarded a flight to Baghdad, at the Iraqi Government’s expense. I’d been hired at a salary which was at least ten times my salary in India. It was even higher than that of my chief engineer.** After a couple of months, my wife took a special six month’s leave from her college and joined me in Iraq. However, she could not take more than six month’s leave at a time, so she had to go back to India, and then come back to Iraq after every six months. By this time our older son had grown to be of school age and, there being no suitable school for him where I was posted, my wife got him admitted to a very highly reputed school in Shimla, India. We let him study there during my posting in Iraq. **In this way, although we could not change anything, all the predictions of my wife’s relative came to fruition!**

Amazing!

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Memories of Iraq

When I reached Iraq, I found the people there very friendly, and hospitable. They would go to extraordinary lengths in their efforts to please and help me and all the other Indians who came to Iraq after me. One time, I and my brother-in-law were riding a bus in Baghdad. Since we couldn't read the signs in Arabic, we asked a passenger who could understand English, to let us know when our desired bus stop was coming up. After travelling a long time, we felt that we had missed our bus stop and decided to get off and take a return bus back.

When we tried to get off the bus, a strange man, with whom we had not talked at all, held us back and indicated that we had not yet reached our destination.

“Okay,” I replied. “We’ll just pay our bus fare.”

“That’s already been done,” we were told. “A person sitting in the back corner of the bus has already paid your fare. He has seen you in his neighborhood, and therefore considers you to be his guests.”

That was a pleasant surprise.

My second memory is about a very laughable situation. It happened to a close friend of mine who had recently come to Iraq. One morning he stepped out of his rented home to go and visit another Indian friend who had recently arrived and had also rented a house in the neighborhood. My friend knew that this Indian lived in the neighborhood, but he was not sure about the exact location of his house. While he was still trying to orient himself, an old woman approached him and insisted upon guiding him to help him find his friend’s house. She led him from one house to another where she thought my friend’s friend might be staying.

All her guesses proved wrong. In the process of going from one house to another, from one street to another, in the scorching summer heat, my friend lost all his orientation. He could only blindly follow her. Ultimately, she came to another house.

“This must be that Indian house,” she said definitively. “The one you are looking for.” Saying this, she triumphantly knocked on the door. She was right, but....

“How was the meeting with your friend?” My friend’s wife asked when she opened the door.

My friend had been led back to his own home!

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Where Guru Nanak Dev Ji Sat

My third fond memory of Iraq is that once, while visiting different museums and other historical sites in Iraq, I happened to visit a cremation ground near Baghdad. In that place beside the tombstones, were also some rooms built on one side. When we asked the attendant about these, he told us that these rooms were built in the memory of some holy people from different places who happened to visit Baghdad long time ago.

Then he showed us one room in which, on the sill above the door, was a slab with something inscribed in Arabic. I couldn’t make out much of this inscription but I could easily recognize the word “Nanak.” I’m familiar with the Urdu language, whose alphabet is very similar to that of Arabic. When I asked the attendant about this,

he told me that a *Darvish* (very holy man) named Nanak stayed at **this place on his way to Mecca. That is the name of the first Sikh Guru.**

This was a very pleasant surprise for me and I shared this information with my Indian friends. The news spread. Soon many Indians found out about this place. We Sikhs would gather there on Fridays, when all offices in the Muslim world are closed, and listen to *Shabads* (hymns), played from a tape recorder.

After passing two pleasant and memorable years, I decided not to extend my stay there, but instead would try to immigrate to the USA. My visa for the US had already been approved while I was still in India.

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Saved by a Turban

When I decided to immigrate to the USA, my wife and five year old son were with me in Iraq, and our eight year old son was studying in Shimla, India. We decided it would be best for me to travel to the USA alone. There, I would join my elder brother, complete higher education studies, and find a job. In the meantime, my wife would return to India, resume her teaching job at the college, and take care of both of our children. Later, after I had completed my studies and had settled in a reasonable job, she would bring the children and join me in the USA.

The plan sounded simple, straightforward and affordable.

Accordingly, I wrote to the US embassy in India to send my US visa to me in Iraq. They replied that, in order to get the visa, I would have to go to the US embassy in Iran. At that time there was no US embassy in Iraq. So, they transferred my file to the US embassy in Tehran, Iran and instructed me to collect my visa there.

In October 1975 my wife and I, with our five year old son, boarded a bus to Tehran. There, I would collect my visa, and my wife and son would board a flight to New Delhi. After passing through many small border towns and villages in Iraq and Turkey, we approached the outskirts of Tehran in the evening, and many passengers started to get off. After a while the bus driver asked us where we wanted to get off.

“At the bus stop in downtown Tehran,” I answered.

“This bus doesn’t go to any particular bus stop,” he said. “So you tell me, where you want to get off.”

This situation was new to me, so I had to think of the best answer despite not knowing the city.

“Drop me near a hotel,” I said.

“Which hotel?”

For that, I had no answer. In those days, we were not accustomed to finding or booking hotel rooms in advance. We used to just travel by bus, and upon reaching our destination we would look for a hotel. We never had any difficulty in finding a place to stay.

“Just drop us off near a place with many hotels,” I answered.

The bus driver took us to a spot on the edge of a road saying that, in this vicinity, there are many hotels.

My wife and I and our five year old son were left on the side of the road in Tehran, along with our luggage. It was getting dark, so I started going from one hotel to another. Without even letting me

enter the lobby, all of them waved me away from their roof tops, indicating that they didn't have any vacancy. Being exhausted, we hired a taxi to take us to the nearest police station and tried to ask them about a Gurdwara. But because they did not know any English, and we couldn't speak any Persian, they couldn't understand anything. They ultimately instructed the taxi driver to drop us at a small bus stand where all three of us spent the entire night sitting on a bench.

In the morning, I resumed my search and started walking from one hotel to the other. But everywhere I went, I saw people lying on the floor, or being angrily turned away by the booking clerks. After completing my search of all the hotels within walking distance, I returned to the bench at the bus stop, completely exhausted, and disappointed. I took off my turban and slippers intending to rest on the bench.

“I see a turban!” My wife exclaimed and pointed. “It’s passing on the far end of the road, on the other side!”

I immediately stood up and, without caring to put on my slippers or my turban, I ran out of the bus stop and saw a Sikh gentleman in the turban walking fast about two hundred yards away. Lest I lose him, I ran as fast as I could and caught up to him.

I told him our story. He kindly accompanied us to the local Gurdwara, and helped us settled there. We stayed until we could find a hotel to stay at. **This is how the sight of a turban, saved me and my family from the trouble of spending more unknown hours or even days on a bench in a foreign land.**

After staying at the hotel for a few days, my wife and son boarded a flight to return to New Delhi. After obtaining my visa from the US embassy, I boarded a bus to Istanbul, Turkey to catch the Oriental

Express train to London, and then a flight from there to New York.

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Higher Studies in the USA

I first stayed with my older brother in Fayetteville, North Carolina, and started looking for a job in the USA. It soon became clear to me that, because of my different appearance and different accent, I would not be able to get any job easily. So, I applied for admission for an M.S. degree in Civil Engineering at North Carolina State University, Raleigh N.C. They refused to admit me in Civil Engineering but accepted me for admission in Ocean Engineering. I accepted whatever I could get. I even made arrangements to share an apartment with another student.

The next day, when I inquired about the tuition fees, I was told I would have to pay out-of-state tuition, which was double the in-state tuition, and was quite high. That meant, to meet the expenses of the rented apartment, and pay for tuition, books, and other supplies, either I would have to accept many low paying jobs outside university campus or borrow quite a significant loan from my brother. My health at that time could not bear the simultaneous burden of higher study and an outside job. I could not bear the idea of asking my older brother for a loan. He was bearing the responsibility of taking care of his own family which included two teenagers.

The situation appeared grim.

While considering all the ways in which I could perhaps try to convince the university authorities to charge only in-state tuition, or provide some financial assistance, my brother remembered some information. Some time before, he had responded to an advertisement from the University of Idaho, at Moscow, offering an assistantship for M.S studies in Civil Engineering. He suggested we should call them and see if that assistantship was still available.

Our call reached professor Calvin Warnick, Senior Professor in the Civil Engineering department.

“Yes,” he said. “The assistantship position is still open.”

By accepting it, I could complete a master’s degree course in Water Resources Engineering and would earn about \$350 per month for assisting in a special Research project. That project would then become my thesis for completion of M.S degree. Then I asked about tuition.

“We don’t charge any tuition from those students, to whom we offer assistantship,” he replied. “But the only problem is that Moscow, Idaho is quite far from Fayetteville, N.C, and our winter session is starting in four days. You’ll have to be here by that time.”

What more could I ask God for a better answer than that!

Without caring about the distance, my health, or any other consideration, I boarded the next bus out of Fayetteville, NC for Moscow, Idaho. This became a continuous journey of more than 100 hours, spending four days and four nights either in the bus or on a bench in a bus-stop. I reached the bus stop at Moscow, Idaho in the evening. There, my saintly professor Calvin Warnick was waiting for me with his car. At that time, I was so extremely exhausted that I did not know where he was taking me from one place to the other, and ultimately deposited me in a room in a dormitory, saying something

about his class starting the next morning. I collapsed onto the bed. When I woke up it was day break.

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First Job in the USA

I had slept a solid twelve hours! I woke up fresh, and energetic, hearing the noise of students in the hallway outside my room. I started to get ready to go to class. I needed a shower. When I entered the dorm bathroom, and pushed open the cloth curtain to the showers, I got the first big surprise of my life in the USA. There I saw three or four guys standing stark naked in front of each other, enjoying their hot shower!

Up to this time, I had either showered alone in a closed bathroom or, if I had to shower with other men, I had my underwear on, and so did they. I returned to the outer part of the bathroom, and waited for those guys to finish their shower. But, before they could finish, other boys came and entered the shower. This process kept going. I was about to give up when an Iranian boy came in. Without showing any awkwardness, he also pulled off all his clothes, including his underwear, and marched into the shower room.

Upon noting that a boy from India's close neighbor, who are more conservative than Indians, had no problem showering naked in front of other guys, I also picked up the courage, undressed myself, and completed my shower. Then I rushed to my first day in a classroom in the USA.

I found the studies comparatively much easier than in India. In India, they followed the annual exam system, where you had to not only please your teacher with regular homework, but also had to sit for an essay exam each year in each of the twelve or so subjects. This is where an outside examiner would set the question paper and could ask any question from your syllabus, whether your teacher had touched on that topic or not. If you fail in one subject, you fail the entire exam and have to start your year all over again.

In the US, they follow the semester system, where your own professor would watch your progress during the course work. At the end, he would most often give you a multiple-choice exam, which would generally account for no more than 25% of your total grade. Even if you fail in any one or more subjects, you would need to repeat only those courses you failed, and not those which you have passed.

Besides the easier semester system, I found that many of the topics I was studying I had already covered in my undergraduate studies. To top it all, I found my major professor Calvin Warnick, to be an extraordinarily nice and helpful gentleman. Some of my colleagues who were enrolled in the adjoining, larger, Washington State University, at Pullman, had to seek appointment and wait many weeks before they could see their professors. But I could walk into my professor's office at any time and seek his help in tackling any problem in the course work, or my thesis. He was so cooperative and eager to help me that one day, in the process of answering my query, he even missed his lunch break and had to go to teach the next class, without lunch. He didn't mind whether his health allowed it or not.

After enjoying many memorable moments with my teachers, the company of my classmates, particularly my roommate, Jeff Coffin,

and many walks from the dorm to the class rooms and computer centers, I ultimately completed my Master degree in fifteen months. Then, I returned to my brother in Fayetteville where I started looking for a job all over again.

In spite of MS degree from a university in the USA, and my previous twelve-year experience in the engineering field, no private company would give me even an entry level job. Not being a citizen, I couldn't apply for any federal jobs, such as those with the Corps of Engineers. As for state jobs, there was no internet in early seventies, and you had to either look for any advertisements in the popular state newspapers, or you had to go to the capitals of each state and look for any jobs on their notice boards.

In the pursuit of my efforts, I registered with the local employment office in Fayetteville, and also bought a round trip ticket which would take me back to Moscow, Idaho. That trip would also take me through many state capitals where I could apply for jobs, and return me back to Fayetteville. My plan was to appear for Engineer-In-Training exams and apply for any relevant jobs which I could find on the notice boards of different state capitals.

On the day of the trip, only half an hour before I was to leave for the bus stop, I received a phone call. The gentleman on the other end introduced himself as Bud Stickle. He was in Eden, North Carolina.

He was calling on behalf of Miller Brewing Company, which was building a new brewing plant in Eden, and they were in need of an Office Engineer. He had come across my name while checking with nearby employment agencies.

“Would you be interested in such a job?” He asked.

“Of course I would be interested in a job,” I replied gratefully. “But before I can say anything more definite, please let me know

exactly what kind of a job this is and what are the major qualification requirements.”

“It is basically an office job,” he replied. “The person in charge keeps track of all the technical papers, drawings, specifications, and changes in the design during the course of construction of the plant. We are actually looking for a Mechanical Engineer, and even though you have listed yourself as a Civil Engineer, we thought we would check with you also, and see if you could handle this kind of a job instead.”

“Even though I’m a Civil Engineer,” I replied. “In my four-year degree course, I spent first two years studying the three branches of engineering: civil, mechanical, and electrical. It is only in the third year that we separated out into our particular branches. But right now, I am getting ready to go to the bus stop to go to Idaho to take the E.I.T. exam, then go to different state capitals to apply for any suitable jobs there. So, before we discuss this matter further, can you please consult with the concerned persons in your company, let them know about my qualifications, and if they think that my qualifications meet their minimum requirements.”

He put the phone down to check with his colleagues.

“You do have the minimum qualifications,” he said when he returned to the phone. “But, before they can make a firm decision, you will have to come for an interview right away. They cannot promise that the job would still be open when you return from your trip.”

This reply put me in a real bind. Do I forego this chance, or forego my plans to appear in the EIT exam? Do I waste this bus ticket? And give up the opportunity to visit so many state capitals and try my luck in those places?

‘Daljit,’ I suddenly felt as if God Himself was speaking to me. ‘You are planning to take this long trip for appearing in the EIT exam, and applying for different state jobs. The main objective of all these efforts, including visiting so many places, is to get a job interview. Here you are getting a job interview right now without going anywhere. What is the problem?’

I immediately decided to give up the bus trip and fixed an interview for Miller Brewing Company the next day. After interviewing for more than two hours, they told me they would let me know about their final decision in one week after checking with the Miller Brewing Chief Engineer. I returned to Fayetteville to wait for their decision. After only three days, the Miller representative called me again.

“The Miller Company Chief Engineer happened to come here,” he said. “There is good news, and bad news for you. **The good news is that he has approved your appointment, the bad news is that this approval is only good if you can join the job within a week.**”

“Sir,” I exclaimed in my excitement. **“I thank God and I thank you very much for this appointment. As for joining within a week, I could start on a bus right now and be there tomorrow!”**

“There’s no need to thank me,” he replied. “You don’t need to rush. Take your time and come to Eden. You can stay in a hotel on company expenses. We will be looking forward to seeing you, soon.”

My goal of a job in the USA was finally achieved!

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Life in the USA

News of this first job in the USA not only made me happy, but was a great cause of joy and relief for my older brother. He happily helped me buy some new clothes and other necessary items for bachelor life. He also arranged a ride for me with a friend of his, who was driving in the direction of Eden the next Sunday. After taking me to a nice hotel in Eden, the friend proceeded further on his journey. The next morning, I reported for my new job at the construction site in a big air-conditioned trailer.

There, Bud Stickles introduced me to other engineers, clerks and administrators representing Miller Brewing Company, S&P representing the design architects, and Gilbane Building Company, the general contractor. They called this arrangement the Project Management Team or PMT. I was going to be the Office Engineer on the payroll of Gilbane, report to Tom Heffernan, the S&P boss, but my pay was ultimately being reimbursed by the Miller Brewing company. In this way, I found myself answerable to not one boss, but three, all at the same time!

Such a situation was naturally a cause for worry, but luckily, I was blessed with the company and guidance of Mike Szostak, a Civil Engineer representing Miller, who was temporarily discharging the responsibilities of the Office Engineer. Mike not only trained me for the office job, but also got me set up in a nice apartment and spent many hours getting me ready to apply for a driver's license in Eden. This was a weak point for me.

In India and Iraq, I never needed to drive. And, driving conditions there were so different from the US. To help me, Mike, and another friend, Joseph Titus, often took me for special driving

lessons in the evenings. I was so bad that, in spite of the help of these two friends in Eden, special trips by my brother from Fayetteville, and lessons from a professional coach, I flunked the official driving test two times. Only on the third attempt did I pass and was able to obtain a drivers license.

As for my official duties, because of good mentoring and help from my friend Mike, I soon became very popular in the entire construction trailer. Another major reason was that by God's grace, I hit upon a logging and tracking system for the status of engineering documents, such as the Field Bulletins, change orders, and Emergency Change orders, that enabled me to keep track of all technical documents, and ensure they were being promptly approved and signed by all the three branches of the Project Management Team. All three of my bosses were so pleased with my work, that after every three-month evaluation, they recommended a 25% increase in my salary.

After being so happily settled in my job, I resumed my efforts to call my family in India. They had been passing through a very rough time there, moving from one house to the other, or living with one friend and another. At the same time, they were making many trips to the US consular office in Delhi, each time returning empty handed after waiting for an entire day outside in the sun. The experience was awful!

The problem was that, since I had come on an immigration visa, which was issued by the US consular officer in Iran, my family also had to come on a family visa. For that, my file had to be returned to Delhi. But unfortunately, as per their normal procedure, the Iranian embassy had burnt my file after six months. Now, I had to apply all over again for my family, and provide proof of my marriage and

other necessary documents, which was not an easy task. Again, God helped me in this matter!

One midnight, I called the US embassy in Delhi, where it was mid-day due to 12-hour time difference, and talked to the Consular herself. When I told her my story, she became very sympathetic

“Get your passport,” she said. “Open it to the page where it was stamped by the US immigration officers when you first landed in the US.”

This, I did.

“Now read to me the number beside the stamp,” she instructed.

I easily did that.

“This number indicates that you came to the US on a genuine legal visa from the US government,” she said. “Have your family contact me directly for their visa.”

I gladly did so and she did so. After a couple of months, my wife got the visa. She and the children joined me in Eden, NC. My family was reunited once again!

After spending a couple of months in an old house in downtown Eden, we moved to a nice apartment near a beautiful golf course. There, we would often go out for an evening walk. One beautiful morning in January, when snow was falling, I accompanied my boys sledding on the snow and ice. After some fun, I felt the need to get something from our apartment.

I had just arrived home when the telephone rang. I picked it up, and found that it was Mr. Tarala, the Miller Chief Engineer – the virtual overall boss of the entire operation.

“I’m in Albany, Georgia,” he said in his Russian accent. “A new beer plant was being constructed here. I’m not happy with the paperwork in this office and I want you to move here and set things

in order. I'll raise your salary by \$2000 a year, but I need you to be here in two days."

The next day I was driving in the snow to catch the flight to Atlanta, and then on to Albany.

Once at the Albany office, the acting Office Engineer, Mike Lillis, thought that I had come there to assist him. When he found out that I was actually supposed to be the Lead in that section, he felt very dejected. He shortly got himself transferred to another section.

By God's grace, I was soon able to streamline the paper trail system there and bring order to the office.

After a short time, I started looking for a house to buy there. I found a house that I liked and felt would be good for my family, but **God saved me from buying this house, because its title was not clear.** The seller's attorney and my own Real Estate agent pressured me to buy the house on the basis of a vague uncertain assurance. They even set up a closing date in just two days.

I couldn't find an attorney in such a short notice. So, after consulting with my older brother on the telephone, I drafted a telegram, saying that since the seller had not provided me the proof of a clear title, I was not coming to the closing.

This telegram was like a bomb shell! Everyone involved, the sellers, my own agent, and the seller's attorney, were all shocked. They even begged me not to press for return of the \$100.00 deposit. They had to return it though. After a couple of months, I found and bought a better house with no legal problems.

At this time, the Miller beer business was going so strong, that they started building another brewery in Trenton, Ohio. This time, the higher-ups in Gilbane, S&P, and Miller, on their own, transferred me to the new site to avoid the initial experience of Albany. But I

didn't like this move, so I started looking for a state job in the Water Resources field and sent out several applications.

One afternoon, while working in the Albany office, where I had been transferred back for a site job, I received a phone call.

"I'm Lee Wright," the man said. "I'm the assistant chief engineer at Kansas Water Resources Board (KWRB). Your application for a water resources engineer has reached our office, would you like to come in for an Interview?"

"Before going further," I replied. "Let me tell you that my professional experience is neither in construction, nor in design. My experience is basically in investigating and writing reports."

"That is exactly what we are looking for," he instantly responded.

On that note we agreed. Since I had to go to Milwaukee, Wisconsin the next week, to the Miller's headquarters, on my way back I could meet them at the Kansas City airport for an interview. Mr. Lee Wright, along with Francine Nebauer, the Director of KWRB, met me at the Kansas City Airport. They conducted the interview, then we all went to our respective homes.

A couple of days after our meeting, they offered me a job as a Hydrologist Three. I accepted and began in August 1980. Since that time, we have lived in Topeka, Kansas. Both of our sons completed their high school education here, and after doing their higher studies at different places, they have joined the professions of their choice. Both have gotten married and are settled in their lives. My oldest son is an Information Technology manager and is living in Paris, France with his wife and two sons. My younger son is a Trauma surgeon, and is living with his wife, a nurse practitioner, in Long Island, NY.

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Blessed with Contentment

It was a hot summer afternoon in August 1980, when I arrived in Topeka at the bus stop. To my amazement, I found Francine Nebauer, my director, waiting for me. She gave me a ride to central Topeka where she had arranged a rental room for me. After enjoying a good night's sleep and a nice breakfast the next morning, I reached my office where a nice spacious room, with a window, had been specially vacated and prepared for me. There, I found the entire staff of about twenty people very cordial and friendly. My director, Francine, was super. She helped me feel comfortable in every way.

After a couple of months, I bought an almost new house in a nice neighborhood, and my entire family joined me in November 1980. My two sons entered nice public schools. My wife also found a job as a Math teacher in a middle school in central Topeka.

Our family life was doing very well when a lot of excitement and change began in the office. First, John Carlin, the Governor of Kansas, made big changes in the structure of the Kansas Water Resources Board, and its governing body, the Kansas Water Authority. He fired Francine Nebauer, and replaced her with Allen Lockner, as new director.

Carlin expected Lockner to produce a new comprehensive water plan for the entire state of Kansas within a couple of years. But, because of his previous experience, or advice of his senior staff, Lockner started moving methodically, and at a very slow speed, working on the thirteen different water basins or the regions of the state, one by one. At this speed, it could have taken him more than twenty years to cover the entire state. But, as a governor in any state could have at the most two four-year terms, Carlin could not wait for

twenty years. So, Carlin fired Allen Lockner, and replaced him with Joseph Harkins, the Director of the Health Department.

Soon after taking charge of KWRB, Harkins facilitated the introduction a bill in the legislature which abolished the KWRB, and in its place created a new structure, called the Kansas Water Office (KWO). This KWO would be under the control of a new Kansas Water Authority, drawing representatives from different water interests in Kansas.

The net result of the new arrangement was that all of the previous staff at KWRB were formally fired. The director was given full authority to recruit new staff, with full authority to choose from the existing staff, or to recruit from the outside. Harkins brought some of his colleague from the Health Department, recruited some from federal agencies, and some he retained from the KWRB. Many he did not.

I was one of the old KWRB staff which Harkins retained. At the time of my interview to keep this job, Harkins told me that he very much valued my work, but because of budget constraints, he could not offer me any more compensation than what I was receiving at that time. But the next year, he would surely give me the raise I deserved. When the next year budget time came, I went to him, and reminded him about his promise. He said, that unfortunately that year also, his hands were tied, but definitely next year he would make it up to me. The same thing happened next year.

The third time when I started from my office towards his office to remind him about his promise, a voice suddenly spoke inside me, ‘Daljit, why are you going to beg from this man, who himself is a beggar. If you have to beg, then beg from the One, who gives to all.’ So, I retraced my steps back to my office, and

never went to him or anybody else for this purpose. The net result of this divine instruction was that I have complete satisfaction and contentment in whatever income I had been making since then. Even though I retired in 2003, I feel that God has blessed me with enough money to live comfortably and worry-free rest of my life, without any burden on my children or anybody else.

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Blessings with Amrit

After forgetting about any pay raises, or other benefits from my employers, I resumed concentrating on my work, and my family. Life was pleasant and I was content in the company of my colleagues, family members, friends, and members of Sikh Gurdwara in Kansas City. In 1980, I happened to visit Manhattan, KS, where I met S. Avtar Singh Sachdeva, who blessed me with a small size edition of *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*.

This later proved to be a source of great strength and mental solace in times of need. The first of these was the Indian government attack on Golden Temple in Amritsar, the Mecca or Vatican of Sikhs. The Indian government's excuse for this attack, with tanks and mortars, was that they wanted to free the complex of some forty terrorists who had occupied this holy place. For this attack, the army chose the martyrdom day of the fifth guru, Guru Arjan Dev Ji. At the time of the attack, thousands of innocent visitors were still in the

complex, and were caught in this attack unaware. The army was so ruthless in their zeal, they blew up more than half the building of Akal Takhat (symbolizing the eternal Sikh political seat), and massively assaulted the holiest shrine leaving it damaged and with many bullet holes. Many innocents were killed.

This sacrilege was not enough. The government then used garbage trucks to haul the bodies away and dump them in nearby landfills. This event brought about a great upheaval in the entire Sikh community throughout the world. A huge conference of Sikhs from around the world was soon held in New York City. A new Sikh association, called World Sikh Organization, was created to respond to the continued attacks of the Indian government on Sikhs and their institutions. Then, the arrests of many innocent Sikhs took place under a new draconian law called the Terrorist Affected Disturbed Areas Act, or TADA. The Indian Government propaganda promoting this was not just limited to India, it actively tried to defame, malign and dehumanize all Sikhs throughout the world as being terrorists.

Naturally, Sikhs all over the globe tried to cope with these tragic circumstances in the best way they could think of. Some youth in India chose to go underground and fight the government's force with force. Some Sikhs, particularly older ones, formed and joined different political action committees to counteract the Indian Government propaganda. Many Sikhs started going to Gurdwaras more often, and even became Amrit Dhari, baptized Sikhs. **In this wave I also gave my name when an Amrit Parchar, or baptizing ceremony, was held in our Gurdwara. This was accomplished in December 1984. To this day I feel grateful to God for bestowing this life-changing gift on me.**

I feel more consecrated to *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, and its blessings, than ever before.

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Guru Nanak's Inspiration

Accepting Amrit Dhari was a life changing event in my life. From that day on, I not only started being more regular in my daily prayers, but also started going to Gurdwara more often. This, even though the nearest Gurdwara is 65 miles away from our house. I also started taking part in Sikh conferences and activities to counteract the vicious false propaganda against the Sikhs all over the world. It was very disheartening to note that on one side, the Indian Government had unleashed a reign of terror against the Sikhs, and on the other, was spreading false rumors through government-controlled news bulletins painting Sikhs as terrorists, or separatists.

One evening, while sitting at my kitchen table, I was thinking what I could do at my level to at least try to blunt the false propaganda against the Sikhs in my local newspapers, and other media. I wanted to tell the local American community that Sikhs were not any kind of terrorists or violent people, but are peaceful people who everyday work hard and pray for the welfare of all humanity. But, how could I prove this point?

While I was thinking about all the different ways to implement this idea, I happened to raise my head, and look at a painting of Guru Nanak Dev Ji, the first Guru (the preceptor) of Sikhs, on the mantel-

piece above the fireplace. My mind started thinking about his travels, different acts of kindness, and the different ways in which he helped the needy and gave sound divine advice to the strayed and suffering people.

“Okay,” I said to myself. “What was the first tangible act which Guru Nanak did that showed he was not just an ordinary person, but truly a divine soul who had the utmost compassion and feeling of love for his fellow human beings?”

This reminded me of the episode, when Guru Nanak Dev Ji was still a teenager, and his father gave him a large sum of money to invest in a truly profitable business. So, Guru Nanak, in the company of his friend Mardana, went to a nearby city where they happened to come across some saintly people who had not been able to afford any meals for many days. **On seeing their plight, Guru Nanak Dev Ji decided to feed these hungry people** and, in spite of warnings and strong protests from his friend Mardana, he spent all his money to feed them, not only for that day, but also for provisions for many more days to come. He returned home and told his father what he had done.

“Why did you waste all your money on those recluses?” His father angrily demanded.

“Father,” Guru Ji humbly replied. “I could not think of any more truly profitable business, than the business of feeding the hungry and helping the needy.”

This true story from the life of our first Sikh Guru Nanak Dev Ji, inspired me to contact my two close Sikh friends, S. Avtar Singh Sachdeva of Manhattan, KS, and Dr. Kirpal Singh of Daytona Beach, FL to form a new charitable organization called, ‘Sikhs Serving America,’ SSA. As our first charitable act, we arranged with

a local Topeka soup kitchen, 'Let's Help.' to give food coupons to needy people so they could eat a vegetarian lunch at a local Burger King on weekends when 'Let's help' was closed.

After a couple of months, 'Let's Help' authorities informed us that our food coupons were not in much demand. Needy people were able to eat free lunches with them on weekdays, on weekends they were also able to live on the snacks and canned food from other sources. If we wanted to truly help the needy, we could do so by helping them buy necessary medicine when they were sick. They would go to emergency room, or even some hospitals for consultations when they had serious health issues. The doctors may examine them for free, but these poor people have no money to buy the prescribed drugs, which can be very costly.

Therefore, we went to the local Shawnee County Health Department and arranged a memo of understanding with them, that they would continue to see and examine poor patients free of charge, and for their prescribed medicines, they would send them to local Walgreens Drug Store, and 'Sikhs Serving America,' would reimburse Walgreens \$200 every month.

When we went to sign this memo, the Shawnee County Health Department had invited the local TV station, and the local newspaper to be present, and they were. When the evening news was broadcast that night, the doctor in charge of Shawnee County was describing our offer as if some angels had come from heaven to help the needy. It was announced that in order to match the contribution of Sikhs, the local Walgreens, had decided to contribute an additional \$200 from their side.

After a few days, I visited my dentist, Gary Newman. He told me that he had read the news and had seen what good work the Sikhs are

doing, so he offered to take care of the \$200 contribution on behalf of SSA. Next year, the Shawnee County Commission decided to match the contribution by SSA, and Walgreens. In this way, this small gesture of \$200 a month from SSA, became \$600 a month, or \$7,200 per year. This turned out to be a great source of free medical help for the poor. **This is how the inspiration from the story of Guru Nanak Dev Ji about his feeding the hungry, on one side helped some needy people in my locality, and at the same time helped improve the image of Sikhs in general.**

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Guru Nanak's Birthplace

In the midst of so many activities among Sikhs at global and local levels, in 1994, a Sikh gentleman named Ganga Singh Dhillon, who was once chosen as the president of World Sikh Organization (WSO), USA branch, and was also the founding president of Nankana Sahib Foundation, came to visit Kansas City. He told us that he was born and raised in Nankana Sahib, the birthplace of Guru Nanak Dev Ji, and recommended that we visit this place. While others brushed this suggestion aside, somehow a deep longing welled up within me to visit this special place. It was where my first Guru was born, where he spent his early childhood years, and showed many divine wonders, even at an early age.

At that time, beside other health issues, I was battling with uncontrolled diabetes, and sudden numbness in my left arm. Therefore,

my family was naturally against this idea. But the urge of going to visit Nankana Sahib was so intense that I couldn't cancel or postpone the idea. So, I checked with my primary doctor, who referred me to a neurologist. After a thorough examination she found no objection regarding my travel plans.

As a result, one Friday afternoon in April 1994, I boarded the plane to Lahore, Pakistan, where the older brother of my friend, Dr. Ashraf Sufi, greeted me. He very cordially helped me check into a nice hotel and exchanged some American Dollars into Pakistan Rupees.

Immediately after settling in my room, I called Mr. Abdul Wahab, a friend of S. Ganga Singh Dhillon, an engineer by profession and the proprietor of a prosperous construction business. He very cordially invited me to his office and placed one of his cars, along with a young chauffeur, at my disposal so I could easily visit different Gurdwaras in and around Lahore. I would also visit Nankana Sahib and Sacha Sauda Gurdwaras (associated with his birth, where Guru Nanak Dev Ji, made his true business investment). After visiting Lahore Gurdwaras, and other important buildings, such as the Shahi Masjid, and the fort of Ranjit Singh, I proceeded to Nankana Sahib in the company of two Sikh friends, whom I happened to meet at Lahore.

On reaching there, we were allotted comfortable rooms in the Nankana Sahib Gurdwara itself. In the evening it became very hot and muggy, so we decided to sleep in the courtyard. During the night, in addition to the heat, mosquitoes started bothering us. Around 3:00 a.m., a strong wind also started blowing. This situation made it impossible for me to even keep lying on the bed, so I got up, and sat waiting for better conditions.

Suddenly, I saw Baba Ishar Singh, the old head priest of this Gurdwara Sahib, walking towards the Gurdwara main sanctuary. He carried an old lantern in one hand, and with the other hand was trying to save the burning light in it from being extinguished by the strong wind. Without anything better to do, I followed him. Upon entering the room, he started first to sweep out the dust gathered there. I offered to do that, but he did not let me. Later, after installing and opening the *Guru Granth Sahib*, **he asked me to take the Hukam (i.e. read the first hymn on the opened page).**

I felt exceedingly honored by this gesture. While reading the hymn, I felt extremely fortunate for being blessed with the opportunity to read Gurbani (the divine words) of Guru Nanak Dev Ji, in that very place where he might have uttered his first murmur in the lap of his mother.

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Gurdwara Litigation

After coming back from Nankana Sahib, I started taking a more active part in Gurdwara activities. In July 1994, for the first time in our Gurdwara, I held a one-week day school for young children. When this program first started, I was the only person to handle the teaching responsibilities, and Karnail Singh Dulku took care of providing snacks, cold drinks, and lunch to the children. Later on, many more people, including the Gurdwara priest, started teaching different subjects, such as Punjabi, Sikh history, and Gurdwara

etiquette. Among these participants, the most significant person was Harbans Kaur Gill, who taught Punjabi to the children. All the Gurdwara members very much appreciated this initiative of mine.

Soon time came to elect a new administrative committee for 1995-1996. One party was in favor of a clean-shaven gentleman. I suggested that at least the Gurdwara president, and the secretary, should be “Sabat Surat Sikhs” (i.e., ones who don’t cut their hair, and adhere to the three other articles of Sikh faith). For this reason, I specially called the “kingmaker” on the opposite side, and suggested some names who would meet the minimum qualifications. I also told the group that, in case none of these men were acceptable to them, or agreed to take up this job, then they could consider me.

Lo and behold, both the groups unanimously decided to select me as the next president. Upon taking the charge along with other five members of the committee, I started doing my best for the betterment of the Gurdwara. The first urgent matter was to complete the connection of the Gurdwara drains to the city’s main sewer system. Many times the drainage would overflow and the Gurdwara people would use a pump to reroute this flow into the city drainage system. This was illegal, and if caught they could be fined \$10,000 for each incident.

The second matter was the county property tax which had been pending for many years. The previous committees had simply been ignoring it. There was a mistaken belief that a Gurdwara was free from all kinds of taxes. This error was discovered when our committee tried to obtain a loan from a bank to pay some pending bills owed to a contractor.

The third smaller matter, which I touched upon at the suggestion of a group member who had previously proposed a clean-shaven

president and was a stiff opposition to the kingmaker's group, was to install a small locked wooden chest in front of the *Guru Granth Sahib*, so devotees could deposit their donations in it, to safeguard against any pilferage. This obviously was a minor thing, but it became the initial cause of developing strong opposition against me. I had listened and acted upon the advice of the opposition group. This was obviously a pretext, because, the wooden donation box is still there, even after I resigned the presidency over twenty years ago, and the “Kingmaker” group has been in virtual control of the Gurdwara since then.

But the major thing, which really started a signature petition against me, was my recommending approval of the immigration petition of a Gursikh lady. She had been actively teaching Punjabi and Sikh History to the children during my last camp, and regularly after that on Sundays. This action was beneficial both to the children, and the teacher, but still I put it up before the executive committee for consideration. Initially members were lukewarm to this proposal.

“If a Sikh Gurdwara won’t help and support a Gursikh,” the previous president of the Gurdwara asked. “Do you think it would be a priest from a Muslim Mosque who would do that?”

Then nobody had any doubts. The proposal was passed unanimously, and we forwarded the application to the Immigration department.

But this act of kindness soon became a great source of jealousy among many members of the *Sangat* (general congregation). Even those Sikhs who daily pray for the welfare of all humanity could not tolerate assisting the welfare of their own Sikh sister who might be getting a free visa for the USA, while their relatives had to spend large sums of money for the same. So, they started a petition drive

calling for an immediate general meeting and withdrawing her visa application.

I believed in my heart this was a right thing to do. It would not only be helpful to the lady and her family, but would be beneficial to the Gurdwara Sangat in general, and the Sikh children in particular. I kept postponing the holding of a general body meeting until the time came for the mandatory annual meeting when vacancies for the new term would be filled. As expected, this meeting was very contentious. I ended up dismissing the meeting and walked out of it in great disappointment and disgrace. In my absence there was a big uproar, so violent that someone called the police. When the police arrived, people calmed down. Eventually both sides agreed to hand over the Gurdwara administration to two neutral members until general elections could be held.

This turn of events was naturally a great source of anguish and tension to me. When I reached home after the meeting in Kansas City, I checked my blood sugar and found it had soared to 400. I immediately took leave from my office, and went to my brother in North Carolina. I spent about a month with him free from any kind of tensions and stress.

In the meantime, back at the Gurdwara in Kansas City, many opposition members kept trying to obtain the withdrawal of the visa application of the lady teacher, but the caretakers kept resisting it. They arranged to select a new management committee, and handed over the visa matter to it. Many of these new members were in favor of withdrawing the visa application. To counteract that, the opposition group made a parallel management committee, in which they named me as their president. In response, the party in power filed a suit in the court against the parallel management committee.

At the very first hearing, I found that the judge was very much in favor of the opposition. Again tension in me was building up and I did not know what to do. If I gave up, the party in power could succeed in withdrawing the visa application of the teacher, and all my efforts to help a *Gursikh* would be negated. If I kept participating in the struggle, I was feeling too much tension, which would seriously damage my health.

One Sunday morning I went to the *Guru Granth Sahib* room in my home, and started thinking about the best strategy. I wrote five options on a piece of paper:

- (1) keep fighting the case,
- (2) withdraw from the case,
- (3) Contact Mr. Devgun (a mediator),
- (4) Call Mr. Dulku (a member of opposition), and apologize in Sangat,
- (5) Do nothing.

With closed eyes, I blew them all towards *Guru Granth Sahib*. When they landed, choice number four was nearest *Guru Granth Sahib*. Number three was next closest. I saw this as clear-cut guidance from the Guru. It immediately brought such a great sense of peace and bliss in my mind that I started feeling as if a fountain of *Amrit* (most comforting divine cold water) had started playing in the top middle part of my head. This fountain of nectar kept flowing, and I continued to enjoy its divine bliss till the evening.

But when I told my wife about my intentions and asked her to get ready to go to the Gurdwara, she completely rejected the idea – at least for that Sunday, anyway. That Sunday her brother had already arranged for *Langar* in memory of their father, and she did not want

any untoward happening in the Gurdwara that day. To honor her, I was compelled to postpone my idea for one week.

In the meantime, I contacted Mr. Devgun, the mediator, and the whole effort ultimately was nullified. The opposing party put some ridiculously stringent conditions, such as requiring me to pay a fine of \$10,000, for letting me withdraw from the case unilaterally. So, the case lingered on. At one point, I advised our group to withdraw from the case, but they did not agree. So, I hired my own separate attorney, and he approached the judge on my behalf, who let me withdraw on the condition that at the end, in case our group lost the case, I may be required to pay a proportionate share of the court costs.

Ultimately the case was decided against our group, and all my partners were fined \$3,500 each, but I was not required to pay anything, because, I had withdrawn earlier.

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Meditation Camp

No doubt, being kicked out of the Gurdwara management, and the subsequent legal struggle, was apparently a serious blow to my psyche and physical health. I even had a heart attack in 1997. Ultimately it proved to be great blessing. After being relieved of Gurdwara duties, I started to pay more attention to my daily prayers and started my own interpretation of *Sri Guru Granth Sahib* into English. This was a long process and I was not sure whether my poor

health would even let me survive long enough to complete this translation. While I was still engaged in this work, after a couple of years I came to know that a Sikh doctor was going to hold a *Naam Simran* (Meditation Camp) in the Sikh Gurdwara in Houston Texas.

I had already heard many good stories about this camp. It was actually started by S. Hardyal Singh, brother of that Sikh doctor, who was secretary of health for Punjab State government, and was diagnosed with a serious incurable heart issue. However, being a Gursikh (Guru oriented person), he had full faith in every word of *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, which assured him that *Nam Simran* (the meditation on God's Name) is the cure for all maladies.

He seriously and sincerely committed himself to *Nam Simran*, and after a couple of months found himself completely cured. Encouraged by his personal experience, he started holding special camps to help others who were also facing serious medical issues. Impressed by significant success of these camps, his brother, who was a doctor, also started holding these meditation camps.

As mentioned earlier, beside my chronic diabetes and heart problems, I was suffering from many other health issues, such as pain in the knee and the neck. I decided to participate in this camp. At the start of the camp, the doctor asked all participants to close our eyes and pray with full concentration for the cure of our particular health issues.

I don't know why but, instead of praying for the cure of my diabetes, I just prayed for the grace of God. Then the *Nam Simran* (the meditation on God's Name) started right in earnest. This included repeating God's Name, and recitation of some selected hymns from *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*. This routine continued for three days, with an occasional mention of a miraculous cure of a partici-

pant in this or previous camps. These stories were encouraging.

At the end of this camp, I stayed overnight with a Sikh friend. From there another Sikh gentleman gave me a ride to the airport for an early morning flight to Kansas City. While waiting for the flight, I started reading and reciting the selected hymns from the camp and boarded the plane in a half-dazed state. While waiting for the flight to take off, I don't know when my eyes got completely closed, I went to sleep. **When I woke up I experienced a strange blissful sensation. I felt as if some beautiful female angels, dressed in all white, were melodiously singing a *Shabad* (hymn), “*Dhann So Vella, Jitt Darshan Karna*” (Blessed is that time, when we see Your sight).**

As far as I could remember, I had never heard this *Shabad* before, particularly not in such a melodious female voice. To me, it was the actual manifestation of a line in *Anand Sahib* (the song of bliss), “*Raag Rattan Parwar, Pareean Shabad Gaawan Aaeen,*” **Along with their families, the female angels have come to sing hymns in melodious musical measures and sub measures.**

In a half-sleep and half-awake state, I was still enjoying this divine experience, when I noticed that the stewardess had already distributed the morning coffee and was returning to put down the coffee pot. I quickly gestured her to bring me a cup of coffee. She brought a cup to me and I automatically took a sip of it.

This turned out to be a big mistake. As soon as the sip of coffee went down my throat, the divine experience which I was enjoying, immediately ceased. To this day I curse myself, why I behaved so foolishly and greedily, that I couldn't resist a cup of coffee and let such a blissful experience end.

A Car Accident

A few days after my return from Houston, I resumed my normal routine, including physical therapy sessions. For these sessions, my wife had to drive me to the facility on alternate days, as my family didn't want me to drive, because of neck problems, and some recent car accidents. One evening after dropping me off at the therapy place, my wife went to do some shopping. After completing my therapy session, I came out of the facility around 5.30 p.m. and noted that, being the month of November, it had already grown dark. I started walking towards the other end of the parking lot where my wife was waiting for me with her car lights on.

Suddenly, I heard a loud thud as I was hit by a car on my left hip. I flew about three feet in the air, then landed on the concrete pavement on my side. I found that a small portion of my turban was between the concrete pavement and my head. This had served as a cushion and saved my head from any serious injury.

I immediately got up and started retying my turban. In the meantime, my wife reached me very disturbed and angry at the facility clerk. The clerk, after closing time, had come out at about the same time as I had. After starting her car on the left side of parking lot, the clerk had accidentally hit me while I was walking towards my wife's car.

The clerk was so nervous and terrified that she went crying inside the office where her superiors were still working. Seeing her in such a fearful state, they came out and started apologizing on her behalf, and telling us how badly she was crying over this accident. I went inside to console her and tell her that I was not going to file any charges against her, so she need not worry.

My wife, however, insisted that I get myself checked at the Urgent Care facility. The supervisors of the facility told us that they would take care of any medical bills on this account. It is by God's grace that neither the Urgent Care, nor the regular Hospital checkup the next day, found any serious injury or concussion in my head, or any other part of my body. **Once again, I marveled and felt thankful to my Guru Gobind Singh Ji for mandating his disciples to always wear a turban on our heads.**

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A Weapons Violation

Four days after the car accident, my wife and I took a flight from the Kansas City Airport to New York to spend some time with our younger son who lives there. As usual, before reaching the security checkpoint, I emptied my pants pockets, took off my belt, and put all those things in my handbag to put on the rollers for passing through the X-Ray machine. Then, I passed through the security gate. As usual, the security person at the other end asked me to step aside. He first asked me to pad my turban, and then he said that he has to pad me on the left side with a hand-held scanner, because the security gate had indicated some red spots on my left side. **But then, instead of my left side he started moving his scanner up and down the right side of my body.**

“OK, you are clear to go,” he said after a couple of breathless minutes on our part.

I picked up my handbag and other things from the rollers, joined my wife and proceeded towards the boarding area. After finding a nice seat, I put my handbag on it and told my wife that I was going to the restroom. In the restroom, to my surprise, I found dangling from my left side my *Kirpan* (the small ceremonial curved knife, which is one of the five articles of Sikh faith, and mandatory for all *Amrit Dhari* (baptized Sikhs) to carry).

Because of the recent strict aviation regulations, any such knife is considered a weapon, and is not allowed to be worn or carried in person on any airline. Many Sikhs had been charged with the crime of carrying a secret weapon on an airline when found wearing this *Kirpan* while passing through the security gate. Therefore, whenever I had to fly, I had made it my habit to leave my *Kirpan* at home and would wear another one on reaching the destination. Now I realized that this time I had forgotten to take off my *Kirpan* and passed through the security gate which had rightly pointed out red spots on my left side.

It appeared that my Guru had again come to my rescue, and somehow made the security officer move his security wand on my right side, rather than my left side. Thus, my Guru had saved me from the charge of trying to carry a secret weapon on an airline.

This reminded me of a Sikh story, in which Guru Ji was seen moving a small coin from one hand to another again and again. When his congregation later asked him about this action, he said that in a far-off place, one of his Sikh shopkeepers was being checked for the accuracy of his weights. He did not know that one of his weights was slightly less than the official measure, and the checking officer was checking it again and again, some time putting the shopkeeper's

weight on one side of the balance and some time on the other side. Therefore, Guru Ji was remotely saving that ignorant Sikh by alternately changing that small coin from one hand to the other.

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Honor at Akal Takhat

As mentioned earlier, because of my signing the visa application of a Gursikh teacher, I was very dishonorably removed from the Gurdwara management committee in 1996. After that, litigation ensued between my supporters, and the opposition group, which now became the new management committee. Naturally, it resulted in a lot of tension, which raised my blood sugar levels dangerously high, and even caused me a heart attack in 1997. Soon, I realized I better get out of all this mess and, even though the other members of my supporting group continued their fight, my attorney got my name taken off the case.

Upon getting clear and free from the Gurdwara problems, Guru inspired me to devote my time wholeheartedly to the work of translating *Sri Guru Granth Sahib* into English. Getting started was a very slow process because I did not know how to type, or even work on a computer. I started by writing by hand a translation of one page of *Sri Guru Granth Sahib* every day, which I would then take to my office secretary to type in her spare time. Once she had the draft typed, I would correct any mistakes and give it back to her for correcting the mistakes. When the final draft was done, I paid her.

After some time even that process came to a halt because the thumb on my right hand started hurting so much that I could not write any more. Therefore, instead of writing by hand, I started dictating my translation on a tape recorder. Then my secretary would transcribe my tapes. This process seemed much easier than writing by hand because now I could dictate much faster than I could write, and my secretary did not have to contend with my illegible handwriting. In this way, I dictated the rest of my translation of SGGGS on a tape recorder.

This resulted in many boxes of audio tapes which resulted in the question of transcribing them. First a friend of mine, whom I had met in Pakistan and who had now moved to Canada, tried to help me by seeking some Sikh volunteers from his Gurdwara, and other contacts. They soon fizzled out, finding the job too time consuming.

Then I contacted Bh. Harbans Lal, a prominent committed *Sehaj Dhari Sikh*, (a committed Sikh, but not keeping long hair). He found a Gursikh in Patiala, India to transcribe my audio tapes at a reasonable price. After going through many iterations of setting up the proper format and doing many revisions to correct and edit several versions, ultimately the entire translation of *Sri Guru Granth Sahib* was completed and printed in seven volumes by Xlibris (a print on demand publishing company in USA) in 2015.

After that, I began to try to contact officials of the supreme Sikh administrative body (SGPC) in charge of all historic Sikh Gurdwaras in Punjab, India for an appointment to present my translation to Jathedar Akal Takhat, the Secretary of SGPC. After many repeated attempts, I was ultimately able to talk with the chief secretary of the President of SGPC. S. Harcharan Singh, proved to be a very nice, knowledgeable, and helpful gentleman. He asked me to send him a

set of the printed copy of all the seven volumes of my translation of *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*. I promptly did this by priority mail from the USA.

I called him after a few days to see if the books had arrived. He told me they had, and he had been able to look through a few pages of my translation. He liked what he saw. Then, he not only invited me to come and present my translation to Jathedar Akal Takhat, but also to the President of SGPC. He also invited me to stay as his personal guest, both at Amritsar, and at his residence at Chandigarh, the modern capital of Punjab state.

Right away, I started preparing for going to India, which I had left forty-three years ago. I had not visited India on my previous trip to Pakistan twenty years before. On April 28, 2016, my wife and I landed at Chandigarh Airport. There, my two very close friends, Harbhajan Singh Sahni and Hardyal Gupta, cordially received us and took turns hosting us at their residences for our stay.

The day after our arrival, my friend Sahni arranged a special party for me to which he invited my other close friends, colleagues, and classmates. I had a great time meeting all these friends and refreshing old memories after four decades. On May 2nd, we traveled to Amritsar, as previously arranged by S. Harcharan Singh, chief secretary SGPC. We were allotted a nice room at the Guru Gobind Singh Rest house near the Golden Temple. Our older son, Mandeep Singh, along with his family, also came from Paris to join us in this moment of my glory and honor, which God was bestowing upon me.

First, S. Harcharan Singh Chief Secretary SGPC invited us into his office. Even though his office was not too far from the guest house where our room was located, still he sent his car and driver to make sure that we didn't have any difficulty on the way. Once in his

office he closed the doors so that no one would disturb us while we were talking with him. Then he very respectfully listened to my story, how I happened to be inspired and motivated to begin this monumental, twenty year task of translating *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*. After that, he called his secretary to bring *Saropas* (robes of honor) for all the members of my family, including my little grandson Aric. His secretary took pictures of this honor.

After that, he told us that unfortunately, Jathedar Akal Takhat, had to go out of state on an urgent assignment, so we would have to wait for a couple of days in the guest house for his return. In the meantime, he had arranged for us to meet with S. Avtar Singh Makkar, the president of SGPC. The next day we were invited to his office. There, he called his press secretary to take pictures, while he honored all of us, again, with *Saropas*. After that, he insisted that we must have a cup of tea before we left.

As Jathedar Akal Takhat's return was still uncertain, we decided to go back to Chandigarh and visit our friends there. By this time, all my step brothers had died, but through the initiatives of one of my step nieces, I had developed very cordial relations with all the children of my step brothers.

From Chandigarh we, along with my son's family, went to Patiala to meet my nephew Guriqbal Singh (son of my eldest half-brother Harnam Singh), chief medical officer at Punjabi University, Patiala. There he used his influence to arrange a special meeting with Dr. Jaspal Singh, the vice chancellor of Punjabi University. We presented him one complete set of the seven volumes of my translation of *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*. Dr. Jaspal Singh received this set with due respect and honor. In return he presented my wife with a beautiful shawl as a token of his appreciation.

After that, my son's family returned to Paris because his one-week vacation was over, and I returned to Amritsar. By then Jathedar Akal Takhat had come back from his assignment out of town and was ready to receive us. Again S. Harcharan Singh sent his car to chauffeur us to the Jathedar's residence. There, again, Jathedar S. Gurbachan Singh Ji received us with great love and respect and honored us with beautiful Saropas, while his secretary took pictures.

This is how, the Guru not only fulfilled my life-long wish to present my humble translation of *Sri Guru Granth Sahib* at Akal Takhat, but also honored me and my family with Saropas, not just from Jathedar Akal Takhat, but also by the President of SGPC and his chief secretary. This was an exceptional event in Sikh history.

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Conclusion

I want to confess that I am an ordinary person, with absolutely no special intelligence, skill, or any special religious knowledge, or worship. Yet, in spite of all of these shortcomings, weaknesses and faults, God has listened to my prayers, whenever I prayed for any special favor. Many times, on His own, God made such arrangements for me that I received, without much effort, many things for which my brothers and class fellows had to struggle very hard. For example, He promptly listened to my prayer for my father's recovery. He listened to my prayer and provided me with the

right guidance when I was floundering in my engineering career. Even without any prayers, He provided me with a nice comfortable job in India within one week of my passing the final engineering exam. It took many weeks for my other classmates to find jobs, even though they had much better grades than my own. And again, half an hour before I was going to board a bus to look for jobs throughout the USA, He arranged a telephone call, from an unknown person, for a job in North Carolina where I was staying.

From these inexplicable experiences, I feel that throughout my life, either God has been arranging to provide me with all the facilities on His Own, without even my asking for the same, even miraculously saving me in difficult situations, or He has been listening whenever I prayed to Him and asked for something.

Naturally the question arises, why God would be so kind to me, in spite of all my inadequacies and faults? The real reason for this extraordinary kindness of God to me is only known to Him. But, my guess for all these divine favors is perhaps that, I have loved and approached God like a naive, humble, and ignorant child. When we approach God like His loving children, without any sense of ego, or claim of service, then leave our fate in His hands, God is very kind and gracious, and showers us with extraordinary benevolence.

Therefore, I suggest that even if for some reason you don't believe in God or had such bitter experiences in life that it shook your faith in Him, or any such supernatural power, then just once more approach Him with a childlike innocence and sincerity of heart. Do not try to bargain or make any business-like deals, such as, 'Oh God, do this thing for me, then I will worship You, or donate so much money.' You can't buy God's favor. Just say, 'Oh, God, I have come to Your shelter, I have made a mistake, and from now on, I

pledge not to make that mistake again. Please save me as You will.’

You may be soon surprised to find that somehow your problem has been resolved. Even if it is not resolved to your satisfaction, consider that God must have some particular reason which He cannot reveal to You at this time. In any case, you don’t lose anything. Just as a good loving child doesn’t abandon his parents if they don’t accede to his demand for a candy, and the child still keeps loving them, and with his loving ways, wins many more favors and gifts from its parents in the near future. **Please just try one more time, approach God in all humility, and place your trust “In His Hands.”** You may be surprised to see the wonderful results beyond your wildest imagination.

I hope these stories from my own insignificant life can be an example of encouragement.

Sincerely,

Daljit Singh Jawa