



# Ambedkar Times Weekly

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## Making Sense of Poona Pact in Current Time

Prem K. Chumber Editor-in-Chief:  
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**Babasaheb** Dr. B. R. Ambedkar devoted his entire life for the emancipation and empowerment of the Scheduled Castes of India who for centuries were compelled to live degraded lives. He tried different ways for this noble cause before finally setting the goal of annihilation of caste. First, he tried to improve upon the situations through reforms within Hinduism. But soon realized that reforms within Hinduism will not work because caste lies at the centre of Hinduism and without caste the latter would come down like a house of cards, which would not be acceptable to its protagonists at all. Annihilation of caste at the first instance requires doing away with the Hindu Sastras (sacred scriptures/law books), which Hinduism would never agree to comply with. Thus the other way and rather the only way open to seek casteless social order was to say good bye to Hinduism and construct a new society under a different religion for the Ex-Untouchables. Dr. Ambedkar finally left Hinduism and established a new socio-religious order popularly known as Navayan-Buddhism (Buddha and His Dhamma) where no one is subjected to any social discrimination based on accretive and primordial notions of caste and creed. In between, Dr. Ambedkar battled many struggles for the betterment of living conditions of the Scheduled Castes. Poona Pact was one of such major struggles.

It was through this historic Pact that Dr. Ambedkar got voice for his people in the provincial legislative structures in the form of certain fixed number of seats. That was 1932. A lot has changed now. State in India is fast withdrawing from its responsibilities towards the people. It firmly believes that market can save them from all the hardships they face. In other words neo-liberalism is being projected as Messiah of the Scheduled Castes. In such a changed scenario downtrodden has to rethink rather critically about the nature of struggle that they have to wage for the acquisition and protection of their rights. Quite interestingly, there is also fast emerging a viewpoint from within the academic circles of the Scheduled Castes which says that neo-liberal market economy offers lots of opportunities to the former untouchables who no-longer face any social exclusion in the aftermath of 1991 Globalizing India. This view-point also talks about SCs billionaires and their own chambers of commerce. What it forgets is that in the free market economy only those are welcome who have the capital to invest. And the capital in India used to be the prerogative of the upper castes only. Lower castes were deliberately kept out of reach of the capital by all possible means under the garb of a discriminatory and hegemonic religious social order. What about the millions of lower castes who do not have requisite capital to enter into the so-called non-discriminatory market economy in India. Would they be not discriminated in this new economic order? Neo-liberalism is no more different from capitalism. We must not forget that the two main enemies of the lower castes are, as cautioned by Babasaheb Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, Capitalism and Brahmanism. Both of them are once again busy in fashioning new permutations and calculations to keep their hold intact. Thus to face the realities of current situation in contemporary India, the teachings of Babasaheb Dr. B. R. Ambedkar are of utmost value as they have been ever.

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## Renaming of a street in Broadway, New York as Shri Guru Ravidass Marg

Renaming of a street in Broadway, New York as Shri Guru Ravidass Marg: I was thrilled with the offer of Respected Shri Prem Kumar Chumber Ji, Editor "Desh Doaba" and "Ambedkar Times" to attend the special and historical event to commemorate the renaming of 61st Street in Woodside, New York, to Shri Guru Ravidass Marg by the Begumpura Cultural Society of New York on September 15, 2024. This provided me with an opportunity to visit Shri Guru Ravidass Temple of New York at Broadway. I reached much before the ceremony and had Darshan of the Gurudwara.

After successfully getting a street renamed to Dr. B.R Ambedkar Way last year, Shri Guru Ravidass Sabha of New York set another historic milestone on 15 September, 2024 by renaming the street adjacent to Dr. B. R. Ambedkar Way as "Shri Guru Ravidass Marg". The dignitaries who shared the dais were Sant Krishan Das Maharaj Chaheruwale, Mrs. Pragya Singh, Consul (Visa), Consulate General of India New York; Julie Won, District 26 city council

universal dignity'.

Pragya Singh (Counsel # Visa), Indian Embassy in New York congratulated the community for this historic achievement. She was happy to note that all the Indian communities celebrate their festivals with vigor and enthusiasm. Indian diaspora has made record forex remittances of US \$1.22 Billion last year and in USA Indian population is only 1.25% and they have contributed 6% Income Tax to the US Government. Indian Embassy is always with you and we have introduced 365 days visa services in emergency cases. She complimented the Indians by stating that you can bring them in foreign countries but can never erase India from their hearts.

Mr. Steven Raga, State Assembly Member,



**Bhim Raj Garg**

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member; Shekar Krishnan, City Council Member; Michael Gianaris, State Senator; Steven Raga, State Assembly Member; Mrs. Saying Sam from NY Mayor's office. Shri Guru Ravidass Welfare Society and other Organisations were represented by Sh. Jaswinder Singh (President), Sh. Paramjit Lal (Chairman), Sh. Santokh Singh (Secretary) and Sh. Raj Kumar, President Begumpura Cultural Society.

Shri Balwinder Bhaura, General Secretary of Guru Ghar, welcomed the dignitaries. He thanked the entire congregation for their support to achieve this goal. He said the renaming of the road was undertaken under the guidance and direction of Shri Guru Ravidass Sabha of New York, Begumpura Cultural Society of New York and Shri Guru Ravidass Welfare Society of New York. Sh Santokh Singh made earnest efforts to realise this dream and his contribution will be remembered by all the Sangat. Mr. Bhaura told the audience that this history moment is being lice cast all over the world.

Shekar Krishnan, City Council Member, commended the thriving community, who brought wonders of our community culture to USA, for this achievement, as it is hard to believe that four decades ago there was no home in NYC for worshippers of Shri Guru Ravidass Ji. In 1987, Shri Guru Ravidass Temple was built on the main intersection of Broadway in the heart of World's borough, illuminated by bright lights visible from afar. He said with the renaming of this street, we dedicate ourselves to Guru's teachings: 'All human beings have an inner divinity. That all human life has a

said this is a great day not only for the Shri Guru Ravidass community but also for the entire populace of Queens Boulevard. Madam Saying Sam, representative from New York Mayor's office, has her roots in India, born in Utrkhand, schooling in Himachal Pradesh and got college education from Gujarat. Her father was an army officer. She told she had the first experience of caste discrimination, when she was in her class first. She was distressed to know that Dr. B. R. Ambedkar studied while standing outside the classroom. She is very close to the community and often attends the Gurudwara Sahib congregation and love to enjoy the food from the community kitchen. Inparticular, she appreciated the sincere efforts made by Sh. Santokh Singh for this project.

On this occasion, Sant Shri Krishan Nath Chaheruwale Ji expressed his happiness being a part of the great event relating to the renaming of Street 61st as Shri Guru Ravidass Marg in Broadway, Queens, New York. The unveiling of the Street Name plate was done by the dignitaries in the presence of Sant Shri Krishan Nath Chaheruwale.

A large number of Shri Guru Ravidass Maharaj's disciples, spanning all ages, were witness to this event. There was huge chanting of 'Jai Gurudev, Dhan Gurudev' and "Jo Bole So Nirbhai, Satguru Ravidass Maharaj Ki Jai".

It was a great day for the members of our society and coming generations will feel honored by this marvelous achievement, the only one outside India.

**Jai Gurudev, Dhan Gurudev**

# MORAL LANDSCAPES AND PARADIGMS IN INDIAN DISCOURSE: A STUDY OF DR. ARVINDER SINGH'S ETHICOGRAPHIES



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In a world increasingly characterised by moral ambiguity and ethical dilemmas, the importance of reflecting on moral values is more pressing than ever. Literature, particularly the essay form, provides a unique platform for this reflection. Essays allow for a nuanced exploration of the intricacies of human nature and the ethical frameworks that guide our lives. As the French Renaissance philosopher Michel de Montaigne once remarked, "The most certain sign of wisdom is cheerfulness." This statement encapsulates the essence of the essay form—its ability to combine philosophical depth with a conversational tone, inviting readers into a dialogue about the nature of morality.

This research article delves into six seminal essay books in the Punjabi language, exploring moral values through diverse cultural, historical, and philosophical lenses. These books are not just collections of thoughts on ethics; they are profound engagements with the fundamental questions of right and wrong, justice and injustice, and the responsibilities that bind individuals to society. The books discussed here are ਜਦੋ ਸਮਿਰਤੀਆਂ ਜਾਗਦੀਆਂ ਨੇ (Jadon Simrtian Jagdian Ne), ਨੁਕਤਾ ਏ ਨਗਿਹ (Nukta-E-Nigah), ਜ਼ਾਵੀਆ (Zaavia), ਪਗਡੰਡੀਆਂ ਤੋਂ ਸ਼ਾਹ ਰਾਹ ਤੱਕ (Pagdandian Ton Shahrah Tak), ਖੁਆਲ ਤੋਂ ਤਹਿਰ ਤੱਕ (Khyal ton Tehrer Tak), ਸਫ਼ਰ ਦਰ ਸਫ਼ਰ (Safar Dar Safar) offer perspectives that span centuries and continents, and yet remain deeply relevant to contemporary discussions of morality.

The titles of the books are often the first point of connection between the reader and the author's work, serving as introductions and carefully curated reflections of the book's essence. A beautifully crafted title can evoke curiosity, provoke thought, and offer a sense of the journey ahead. It acts as a conceptual distillation of the themes, style, and tone the reader can expect. The titles of the books of Dr. Arvinder Singh are sculpted so beautifully that one is stuck at the title and the chain of reflectiveness starts before we open the pages. In Dr. Arvinder Singh's, ਸਫ਼ਰ ਦਰ ਸਫ਼ਰ (Safar Dar Safar) the title alone is enough to stir deep emotional contemplation, encapsulating themes of human anguish, endurance, and the moral implications of empathy. The repetition of safar intensifies the emotional weight, implying that suffering is both an individual experience and a shared, universal condition. Similarly, Zaavia—another of his works—conveys a sense of perspective, hinting at

the author's intention to offer new viewpoints or insights. The word itself, meaning "angle" or "perspective" in Urdu, reflects the multifaceted nature of human experiences and thoughts, encouraging readers to see the world from different vantage points. The use of Urdu vocabulary, such as in Khayal to Tehrir Tak, where khayal (thought) and tehrir (expression) are central, adds a lyrical, cultural richness to the titles. These words evoke a sense of intellectual and emotional depth, reminding us of the linguistic heritage that informs the philosophical content of the essays. The author's deliberate choice to use Urdu terms not only enhances the beauty of the titles but also situates the work within a broader cultural and moral framework, resonating with readers familiar with the language while inviting others to explore its nuances. Titles like these are essential because they summarise the thematic content and set the tone for the intellectual and emotional engagement that follows. A title such as Khayal to Tehrir Tak evokes a sense of a journey, from thought to expression, suggesting a deep, reflective process of converting abstract ideas into tangible words. The beauty in such titles lies in their ability to provoke questions even before the book is opened—questions about internal journey, introspection, perspective, and the power of language. Dr. Singh's careful selection of titles and the inclusion of Urdu vocabulary create an inviting atmosphere of contemplation and discovery, where the reader is enticed by the resonance of familiar terms and the philosophical weight they carry. In this way, the titles themselves become part of the reading experience, enriching the work before a single page is turned.

ਜਦੋ ਸਮਿਰਤੀਆਂ ਜਾਗਦੀਆਂ ਨੇ (Jadon Simrtian Jagdian Ne) by Dr. Arvinder Singh, published in 2018, is a thesis of Seventy-five essays replete with ethical values and ideals through narrations. By having a glance at the book ਜਦੋ ਸਮਿਰਤੀਆਂ ਜਾਗਦੀਆਂ ਨੇ, it can be said that it's an impressive book which at once arrests attention. It is impressive because of its various aspects, the first and foremost being, its moral tone. The articles in the book, though brief in size, are deep in thought and are imbued with classical morality: a thing of the bygone age. The overall vision of its author is ethical and inspiring. It encourages the reader to understand the significance of life and its various aspects and suggests to the reader to tread the path cautiously with truth, the goodness of thought and deed, and a sense of social well-being. The writer is quite clear in his perception and has the perfect ability to communicate this in a style well suited to its subject.

Another aspect is its simple and superb style. The author is well-versed in literary stylistics and knows how to convey deep emotions in short and pithy prose. His prose is crisp, precise and compact with no work more

than what is essential. There are several purple passages which attract the reader's fancy and have the potential of becoming quotable quotes—perhaps as a result of his wide readings and deeper ruminations. Then there is the beauty of its language. In the past two- or three-decades Punjabi prose has been losing its old charm. This book reminds of Gurbaksh Singh Preet Larri and Principal Teja Singh. The author of this book has chosen to follow in their footsteps and has written in a chaste literary idiom. He is very economical with words and has succeeded in combining brevity with brilliance.

While we go through ਨੁਕਤਾ ਏ ਨਗਿਹ (Nukta-E-Nigah), published in 2020, it at once captures us by presenting a unique literary genre, the genre of short essays which can be looked upon as an endeavour to recognise the truth of life. The book comprises no less than seventy-five short essays. All of these begin by having a dialogue with some saint or a person with high moral values. All essays, in the book are in the form of narration by some saint or guru or some Paigumbur' and the values that they preach, have been emphasised by citing illustrations from life itself. Nukta-E-Nigah by Dr. Arvinder Singh delves deeply into universal themes such as happiness, satisfaction, friendship, the act of giving, love, trust, wisdom, knowledge, patience, silence, self-respect, and the cyclical nature of life. Each of these themes is woven into the narrative with care, reflecting the complexities of human relationships and personal growth. Happiness and satisfaction are depicted not as fleeting emotions but as states achieved through meaningful connections and inner fulfilment. Friendship and giving emerge as pillars that support love and trust, creating a foundation for enduring relationships. The narrative also emphasises wisdom and knowledge as guiding forces in navigating life's challenges, suggesting that patience and silence often serve as powerful tools in resolving conflicts and gaining perspective. Self-respect is shown as essential for maintaining one's dignity, while the circle of life represents the inevitable cycles of beginnings and endings, mirroring the ebb and flow of human experiences. Bhalla's exploration of these themes offers a holistic view of life, emphasizing balance, introspection, and the interconnectedness of human emotions and values. Dr. Arvinder Singh's writing style in Nukta-E-Nigah is distinctive for its ability to communicate profound insights through short essays that are both accessible and impactful. His approach to short essays allows him to distil complex emotions and themes into concise yet meaningful reflections. By using this form, he creates a space for readers to contemplate each topic in isolation, making his work both digestible and thought-provoking. The brevity of the essays does not compro-

mise their depth; rather, it enhances the intensity of the ideas being conveyed, enabling readers to engage with the material without feeling overwhelmed by verbosity.

His language, although the vocabulary is picked very carefully from Arabic, Persian and Urdu also, is marked by simplicity, clarity, and elegance, which makes his work approachable to a wide audience. Dr. Arvinder Singh's diction avoids overly academic or convoluted expressions, instead opting for a conversational tone that resonates with readers on a personal level. This makes his writing relatable, as he often uses everyday experiences and observations to illustrate universal truths about happiness, love, trust, and self-respect. His sentences are typically well-structured, flowing smoothly from one thought to the next, creating a rhythm that is easy to follow. Yet, beneath this simplicity lies a deeper philosophical undertone that invites introspection and self-awareness. In his work, language serves as a bridge between the reader and the intricate emotional landscapes he explores. He often employs metaphors and symbolic language to add layers of meaning, especially when discussing abstract concepts such as the circle of life or the silent wisdom found in patience or a tale of morality narrated by a saint. By blending these literary devices with a straightforward narrative style, he manages to strike a balance between poetic expression and practical wisdom, making his writing both evocative and instructive. Ultimately, his unique style lies in his ability to distil life's profound complexities into short, poignant essays that resonate on an emotional and intellectual level.

His other book titled ਜ਼ਾਵੀਆ (Zaavia), again a compilation of seventy-five essays, can be credited with popularising the moral essay as a literary form. The essays in the book are a rich tapestry of personal reflection, classical references, and philosophical inquiry. His approach to moral values is deeply humanistic, grounded in the belief that understanding oneself is key to understanding the broader human condition. Dr. Arvinder Singh's exploration of morality is not prescriptive but reflective. He does not offer a rigid set of moral rules but instead invites readers to consider their own values through the lens of his personal experiences and observations. Almost all of his essays are narrated through the mouth of some saint, daanishwar, or guru. His essays challenge readers to think critically about the societal norms and laws that shape moral behaviour, suggesting that what is considered moral is often a matter of custom rather than universal truth. Through his essays, he argues that morality is deeply subjective, influenced by culture, education, and personal disposition.

In Zaavia by Dr. Singh, the diction is deeply reflective of a moralistic (Contd. on next page)

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tone, aligning with traditional values and ethical concerns. This moralistic nature is heightened by the author's deliberate choice of words and phrases from Arabic, Persian, and Urdu, languages that carry historical and cultural significance in Punjabi literature. Arabic and Persian, in particular, lend a certain philosophical depth to the text, as these languages are rich in metaphors and expressions associated with wisdom, spirituality, and moral instruction. Urdu, a language known for its poetic elegance, enhances the lyrical quality of his prose, imbuing the work with an emotional resonance that appeals to both the intellect and the heart. This fusion of languages allows him to engage with the reader on multiple levels, intertwining ethical reflections with a sense of cultural and spiritual heritage. The moralistic tone is reinforced by the thematic concerns of the text, where concepts of right and wrong, virtue, and human duty are examined to guide the reader toward ethical contemplation. The diction, thus, not only shapes the aesthetic experience of the text but also serves as a vehicle for conveying timeless moral values through these narrations. Through these essays, Dr. Singh is motivating the readers to develop an inquisitive spirit and positive attitude towards life as well as advocates the virtues of dedication, surrender to the will of God, attaining self-confidence, and engrossing in the dream cherished in the minds for ages.

ਪਗਡੰਡੀਆਂ ਤੋਂ ਸ਼ਾਹ ਰਾਹ ਤੱਕ (Pagdandian Ton Shahrah Tak), published in 2023, is again a collection of seventy-five short essays and it is the consequence of his minute observations, his comprehensibility and his concerns and considerations of life through the closer lens than anyone else. Then came these deliberations. His work is marked by a profound belief in the individual's capacity for moral reasoning and self-reliance. His essays are a shred of clear evidence for this, encapsulating his belief that true morality arises from within the individual rather than from external authorities or societal conventions. In most of his essays, he advocates for a morality that is deeply personal, and rooted in the individual's relationship with nature and the divine. He challenges the reader to reject conformity and to live according to their inner moral compass. Emerson's moral philosophy is one of empowerment, encouraging individuals to seek their own truths and to live authentically, even when this means standing against societal norms. His essays resonate with the transcendentalist belief in the inherent goodness of humanity and the idea that moral values are best discovered through introspection and a deep connection with the natural world.

Dr. Arvinder Singh considers that human beings have to go through unlimited difficulties and have to pass the toughest exams at every step which becomes a testament to where they are tested. Wherever these difficult situations lead us, human beings

always attain their destination if they don't falter from their faith. Devotion and complete surrender to the will of God is one of the significant thematic patterns which runs through almost all of his works. ਪਗਡੰਡੀਆਂ ਤੋਂ ਸ਼ਾਹ ਰਾਹ ਤੱਕ (Pagdandian Ton Shahrah Tak) reflects a profound philosophical meditation on life's transitions, using the metaphor of moving from a sidewalk to a boulevard as a way to explore personal growth, change, and the human experience. This metaphor, while simple in its imagery, encapsulates the complexities of life as individuals move through different stages, each with its own set of challenges, opportunities, and revelations. The transition from a narrow sidewalk to a wide boulevard can be viewed as a journey from limited understanding and experience to broader horizons and more diverse, challenging experiences.

The sidewalk represents the early stages of life, characterised by simplicity, innocence, and a more limited view of the world. On the sidewalk, individuals are often confined to a predictable, linear path. It may symbolise a time when people are more inward-focused, concerned primarily with their own immediate environment and personal experiences. This stage could be interpreted as one where choices are limited, and life feels more constrained, perhaps representing childhood or the early phases of adulthood. It is a place where the individual is often guided by external forces, whether by family, societal expectations, or cultural norms. As life progresses, the metaphorical movement toward the boulevard reflects a broadening of the individual's life experience. The boulevard, in contrast to the sidewalk, is open, wide, and bustling with activity. It represents the complexities and diversities of the adult world, where individuals are faced with numerous opportunities and challenges, responsibilities, and choices. On the boulevard, life becomes more multidimensional; it involves navigating relationships, ambitions, societal pressures, and moral dilemmas. The boulevard is where one encounters the full spectrum of human experience, both the beautiful and the burdensome. This transition from sidewalk to boulevard also speaks to the inevitability of growth and change. As people age and experience more of life, their perspectives shift. They are no longer confined to the limited viewpoint of their younger selves. Instead, they become part of the larger world, where they must confront not only their own desires and fears but also the complexities of social structures, relationships, and moral imperatives. In this sense, the boulevard is not just a place of movement but also a place of transformation.

The metaphor in the title also suggests, rather highlights, the uncertainty that comes with growth. The boulevard, much like adulthood, requires individuals to balance freedom with responsibility, ambition with morality, and individuality with community. In addition, the movement

from sidewalk to boulevard can be interpreted as a commentary on the passage of time. Life, like a journey, inevitably progresses, and with each new phase comes a new set of circumstances and expectations. This progression is not always easy, but replete with challenges and hardships as it often involves leaving behind the familiar and stepping into the unknown. Yet, Dr. Singh seems to suggest that this journey is essential for personal development. It is through the movement from simplicity to complexity that individuals gain a deeper understanding of themselves and the world around them. ਪਗਡੰਡੀਆਂ ਤੋਂ ਸ਼ਾਹ ਰਾਹ ਤੱਕ (Pagdandian Ton Shahrah Tak) reflects on the human condition and how life's journey shapes our identity, values, and understanding. The book invites readers to consider their own paths, reflecting on where they have come from, where they are going, and what they have learned along the way. The author's use of the sidewalk and boulevard as metaphors for life's different stages emphasises the importance of growth, the challenges of navigating an ever-expanding world, and how we are transformed by our experiences. He offers not only a meditation on life but also a guide for how to approach the inevitable transitions that life offers.

ਖੁਆਲ ਤੋਂ ਤਹਿਰੀਰ ਤੱਕ (Khyal ton Tehreer Tak), published in 2024 is a beautiful collection of thirty-five essays on the themes of humanity, religion, education and life. These are pondering upon prudence, meditation, contemplation introspection, subtly dispensing everything, in the diction uniquely of the author. The book is divided into four sections and each section deals with a particular theme under the title. An effort to do an objective and solemn analysis of the issues concerning social, religious, cultural, economic, and political has been made while negating the surface-level blind faith and emotional bent resulting in negativity. The message has been delivered beautifully to renunciate the rigidity and adopt an optimistic attitude to life. As the title suggests, Khayaal to Tehrir Tak offers readers a deep reflection on the creative journey from thought (khayaal) to written expression (tehirir). It serves as a bridge between the internalised world of ideas and their outward articulation, with a particular focus on the artistic and philosophical transformation that occurs, during the writing process. At its core, this work is a meditative exploration of how ideas evolve, grow, and take shape in the mind before they are materialised into text. Khayaal, a term often used in Sufi poetry and classical ghazals, refers not only to fleeting thoughts but also to profound reflections on life, beauty, and spirituality. The transition from this ephemeral mental state to Tehrir—the concrete act of writing—requires more than just skill; it involves a transformation where abstract emotions, ideas, and intuitions are carefully crafted into a tangible form that can be communicated.

Dr. Singh's engagement with

this process is both philosophical and practical. Thematically, Khayaal to Tehrir Tak examines the difficulty and beauty of translating complex human emotions into words. The act of writing, for him, is not a mere mechanical process but a profound experience where the writer must balance creativity and structure. This strain remains the central aspect of the work, and the author seems to emphasise that writing, while creative, must adhere to certain aesthetic principles to achieve clarity and impact.

One of the remarkable features of Dr. Singh's writing is the way he integrates linguistic and cultural influences. His use of Urdu, Persian, Sanskrit and Hindi terms imbues the work with a cultural richness that resonates with readers who are familiar with these traditions. The diction, deeply influenced by the works in Urdu, Persian and Arabic adds a layer of musicality to the text, while also reflecting on the ethical and moral dimensions of writing. The language also displays his grip over the various languages and how the words from these languages are beautifully interwoven in the text, is truly incredible and outstanding. The writer's role is not merely to entertain or inform but to engage with truth, beauty, and justice. The work also delves into the technical aspects of writing, addressing questions such as how to sustain the integrity of an idea from its inception to its expression. This concern with maintaining the purity of thought as it is transcribed onto the page is a recurring theme, echoing traditional concerns in literary criticism about the fidelity of representation. The metaphor of the journey—from the internal to the external—suggests that writing is an evolving process that requires constant refinement and revision. The transformation from Khayaal to Tehrir is not linear but involves rethinking, editing, and revisiting ideas.

Structurally, Khayaal to Tehrir Tak follows an essayistic style, interspersed with anecdotes and reflections on writer's own experiences as a writer and thinker. The personal tone of the work allows readers to see the intimate relationship between the writer and his craft. This personal approach also reinforces the idea that writing is not merely a professional task but a form of self-expression, deeply tied to one's intellectual and emotional life. Critically, the work invites comparisons with other literary and philosophical texts that explore the act of writing. His approach is rooted in Oriental traditions, drawing upon the ethical frameworks of Sufism and Sikh philosophy. This combination of literary theory and moral reflection makes Khayaal to Tehrir Tak a unique contribution to contemporary literary discourse. It is a deeply introspective work that addresses both the philosophical and technical aspects of writing. His reflections on the moral dimensions of writing offer a thought-provoking perspective on the writer's role in society. Through its blend of

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personal experience, philosophical inquiry, and practical advice, the book serves as a valuable resource for writers, thinkers, and anyone interested in the creative process.

Written in his own unique style *ਸਫ਼ਰ ਦਰ ਸਫ਼ਰ* (Safar Dar Safar), published in 2024, is stamped in his prose style like the one adopted by classical authors like Gurbaksh Singh Preet Lari and Principal Teja Singh. We can say that *ਸਫ਼ਰ ਦਰ ਸਫ਼ਰ* (Safar Dar Safar) is a significant piece by Dr. Arvinder Singh, and part of his broader thematic focus on moral and philosophical inquiries. The title, which translates to "Journey within a Journey," suggests the unfolding of multiple layers of meaning and experience. At its core, the work explores the idea of personal and spiritual voyages, where each step uncovers new insights about oneself and the world.

The tone is again moral, and all anecdotes are written for morality and not a single out of sixty-five is without any indication of morality. It reminds us of the days when literature was truly literature and was written for the betterment of society. The author does not go astray and never bores us by citing small examples to preach the unique model behind the tale and soon completes it lest these should become lengthy to let us go off track. As far as as diction is concerned one is spell-bound by his usage of the vocabulary. Words from Persian, Urdu, Arabic, Sanskrit and Hindi are used with such ease that it becomes unexplainable how a person has expertise in the usage of so many languages. His own experiences

speak about themselves and find a relevant place in the pages. Even the most complex situations have been dealt with spontaneity. The posterity is definitely going to avail by these experiences and it becomes imperative to go through these anecdotes if we truly believe that the degeneration of the generation should be demolished. This book is a welcome step for the upliftment of the society.

A complete and noble human being, according to him, treads upon the path of fearlessness, high thinking, noble deeds, determination, self-discipline, kindness, honesty and the ability to use the perfect opportunity which makes a person the best and unique human being. He considers this journey of Creative Writing as a worship, an ibadat His creative writing displays his sincerity of thought, aestheticism, emotions, a tendency for critically evaluating things, his vast experience and deep-rooted knowledge. His writing style places him on a pedestal which is unique, attractive research-oriented and meaningful.

His writings have the power to shake the whole inner being. The structure of *Safar Dar Safar* mirrors the nonlinear nature of personal and spiritual growth. The journey is neither smooth nor predictable; instead, it is fragmented, where each segment of travel reveals a deeper, more introspective reality. This mirrors the Sufi tradition of travel not just in the physical realm, but within the heart and soul. The author emphasises how the external world and the internal world are interconnected, with one reflecting the state of the other.

The journey in *Safar Dar Safar* is metaphorical rather than literal, and the motif of travel is used to delve into existential questions. Dr. Singh has drawn images from Arabic, Persian, and Urdu traditions that often employ journey metaphors in mystical and philosophical contexts. In this journey, the traveller encounters obstacles, not necessarily in the form of physical barriers but internal struggles such as doubt, fear, and confusion. These challenges are symbolic of the soul's quest for enlightenment and self-realisation. Discussing the language used in the book, it can be articulated that it is steeped in the moralistic diction typical of the style of the author. His use of words from Arabic and Persian lends the work a philosophical gravitas, allowing him to engage with the deeper metaphysical themes that run through the text. The diction is deliberate, invoking a sense of timelessness and universality, where the specific journey of the protagonist resonates with readers on a personal level, inspiring reflection on their own paths.

One of the key philosophical concepts in the book is the idea of destiny versus free will. The protagonist is constantly balancing between surrendering to the predetermined course of life and actively shaping their path through choices and actions. The essays raise questions about the nature of human agency, suggesting that while much of life is beyond our control, our responses to the circumstances of the journey define who we become. The author follows a similar tradition in this work too, i.e. complete surrender to the will of God and devo-

tion, dedication and meditation. *Safar Dar Safar* is an intricate exploration of the journey of life, both in its physical and metaphysical dimensions. Through rich symbolism, moralistic diction, and philosophical musings, the author presents a work that challenges readers to think about their own life's journey. It reflects the notion that life is a continuous process of discovery, where each step leads to a deeper understanding of self and existence, making the journey itself as important as the destination.

Such books with moral notes have appeared after a long time and they should be welcomed as it is the need of the hour. The exploration of moral values through these books offers a unique and enriching journey into the heart of ethical thought. The six books discussed in this article represent a broad spectrum of philosophical perspectives, from the introspective to the existential dilemmas. Each of these works invites readers to engage deeply with the questions that define our moral lives—what it means to live well, to act justly, and to be true to oneself.

These books, through their personal reflections and philosophical musings, provide not only a commentary on their times but also timeless insights that continue to resonate in our contemporary world. By reading and reflecting on these works, we are not merely absorbing moral lessons; we are participating in a centuries-old conversation about the nature of good and evil, right and wrong, and the ethical responsibilities that we all share as human beings.



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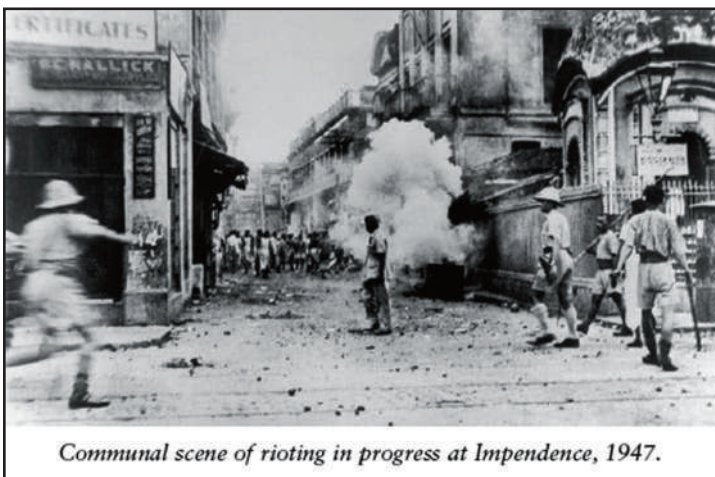
# Progression of the Nanig Ram family tree

After settling down in the haveli at Hanuman Road, the Soni family started proliferating, with Indra Kaur at the helm. Eldest son Mohan Lal, after marriage to Rama Devi, had two sons-Uttam (1924) and Jagdish (1936). For Sohan Lal and Bankey Lal, Agra businessman Nand Kishore's two daughters, Natho and Kishan Devi, were selected in quick succession. Among the daughters, Jamuni was married to Chunni Lal and Shanti to Vimal Chandra.



Indra Kaur. 1940s

The family unit worked cohesively under the control of Indra, addressed as Ammaji. The sons took care of the family business, which now included running Imperial Talkies in Paharganj. She was the arbiter of issues, pertaining to business or family relationship, and took important decisions. Indra inculcated family values among young emerging members. She conducted pooja and prayers, observing appropriate rituals at festivals and social occasions. Her knowledge of invocations was impressive, drawing intricate religious symbols/patterns and appropriate mandalas on the cho-



Communal scene of rioting in progress at Impendence, 1947.

sen spot for pooja. There was an element of age-old folk tradition in her practices. Festivals were celebrated elaborately. On Raksha Bandhan, Holi, Dussehra and Diwali, Indian sweets/savouries were prepared by ladies at home for the joint family congregation. The kitchen was operated under Indra's personal supervision, by the three bahu, who among themselves, divided the responsibility of cooking and household activity. The senior bahu had the charge of the pantry store, but the key was kept with

Ammaji. Ration and items of common use were bought in bulk every month. There was a stone chakki to do fresh grinding of wheat/cereals/masalas at home by the ladies. Only pure desi ghee was used as cooking medium. Milk from a nearby dairy, freshly drawn from a cow in front of one of the bahus, was brought twice a day.

The common meeting place used to be her living quarter, situated at the centre point of the home, opening out to four sides, sharing it with her husband's long widowed sister "Puniya Bua". It was here that everything under the sun was dis-



From right Ratan Devi, Kishan Devi, Jyoti, Gaurav and Kamal. 1980

cussedcommunity developments, business and family issues, ticklish problems to be sorted out and consensus reached with her intervention. In a discreet corner of her room, was kept a heavy iron safe, to store expensive jewelry, precious items. At the end of day, cash collections from the Cinema were stored for safekeeping, before being deposited in the bank, the following morning. Its key was kept under her possession, in a string, carried on her person. She would not part with it, even when going to the washroom.

It is worthwhile recounting notable events, pertaining to individual units that constituted the joint family, under the three successors from 1940s onwards.

### Nanig Ram's legacy carried forward

The eldest son Mohan Lal (Bade Bauji), proved his mettle, standing up to the challenge, during the successful transition. He was decisive, had a commanding presence and brooked no nonsense.

Tragedy struck when his wife Rama Davi passed away in the late 1930s. As his two boys were still small, the need for a wife to look after them was pointed out by Ammaji. From Firozabad, a young girl Ratan Devi was identified and marriage solemnized. She turned out to be a child bride. The 'gauna' (consummation) ceremony had to be delayed for a few years.

Mohan Lal felt betrayed by such gross misrepresentation of the bride's age. He started frequenting

traditional Indian vaid (practicing Indian medicinal system) to get over his 'performance' anxiety. He was prescribed potency increasing medicines. Such heavy dosage was bound to take its toll. He became a chronic diabetic, necessitating intake of regular dose of insulin. Other complications affected his heart condition.

### Delhi's communal riots - August - September 1947: A window view from ancestral home at Hanuman Road

The Independence of India on August 15, 1947, simultaneously with its partition into two separate nations,

September 1947. In no time the city was turned into a battle zone. The hospital was located on the periphery of the thickly populated

Muslim dominated areas of Paharganj and Karol Bagh. These were the localities, vacated by the Muslims, fleeing to the Pakistan side of the demarcated border, that the mass of incoming Hindu refugees from Pakistan, forcefully occupied. Direct encounters between the adversaries, armed with swords, knives, guns and lethal weapons, became common occurrence at street corners.

People from the surrounding areas, with grievous wounds and oozing blood, needed immediate medical attention. Lady Hardinge was a maternity hospital but that distinction was ignored. Wounded people, irrespective of their gender, were brought in loaded vehicles and dumped in halls, corridors or wherever there was available space. Blood soiled clothes/ dressings could be seen piled up in unhygienic conditions all around. Dead bodies were overflowing from the morgue. The hospital premises reeked of stench and foulest of smell. The sighing cries of

brought in its train heart-rending mass killing of millions of people on communal grounds. This was accompanied by migration of refugees on colossal scale, on either side of the border. Both Hindus and Muslims were affected. The capital city Delhi, witnessed some from the most brutal murderous scenes on the streets in August- September 1947. Our neighbouring area of Connaught Place, was one of the worst affected, we were witness to. We, the residents of 53, Hanuman

Road, at the entry point from nearby Connaught Place/Parliament Street, saw firsthand gruesome scenes of grievously hurt victims, filing past the house, rushing to safer havens or perhaps to find sanctuary in public places like Hanuman mandir, Arya Samaj mandir or Gurudwara Bangla Sahib, at either end of the road.

Mohan Lal, with his pregnant wife Ratan Devi, occupied the front portion of the house, called 'Guest Room', with a window view, overlooking the road. My aunt (Tai) was advised by Dadi, not to expose herself to disturbing scenes that may damage her psychologically, at a vulnerable time of child birth. But she could one resist the temptation of watching live action.

It was under such circumstances that Ratan Devi was admitted to Lady Hardinge Medical College, for delivery of the child, just as communal riots reached its peak in Delhi in early



Ambesdor V.B. Soni



From left Kishan Devi, Shanti and Natho Devi

the wounded, piercing though darkness of the night made the surrounding area spooky. Patients invariably suffered from nightmares. It was a depressing environment, pervading all around.

For security reason, the hospital premises was sealed off as no-go area, except for the medical staff and security agencies. For more than a week, Ratan Devi recalled, she had lost contact with outside world. Even her husband could not get permission to visit her. All he could do, was to deliver food packet meant for the wife at the front gate, indicating her name. In the ward two ladies shared the name Ratan Devi. The packet would invariably get mixed up and delivered to the wrong person! A son was born to Ratan Devi on September 15, 1947. Being held incommunicado, nobody at home got to know about the date and time of birth, far less the gender of the

(Contd. on next page)

# Progression of the Nanig Ram family tree

(Continue from page 5)

baby, for some time. The English lady doctor on duty, remarked that she ended up delivering 19 girls in succession that day. That sequence was broken with the delivery of her son. It was this doctor, who gave the name 'Kamal' to the boy, keeping in view the

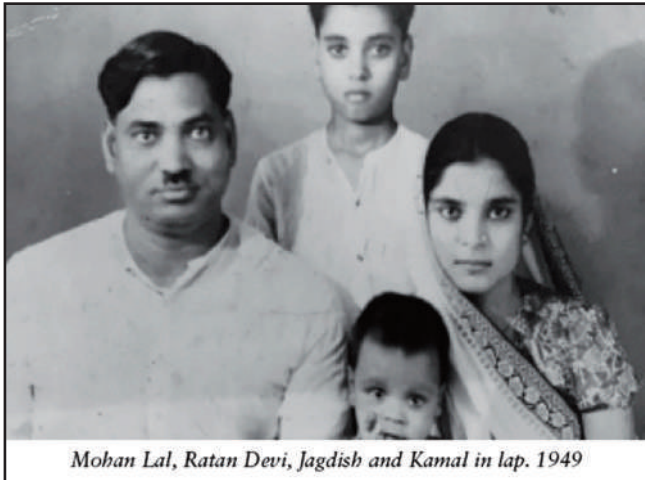
turned but only after playing havoc with the lives and psyche of the ordinary folks. A traumatic experience indeed.

## Lahore Massacre Survivor – Kanshi Ram mausaji

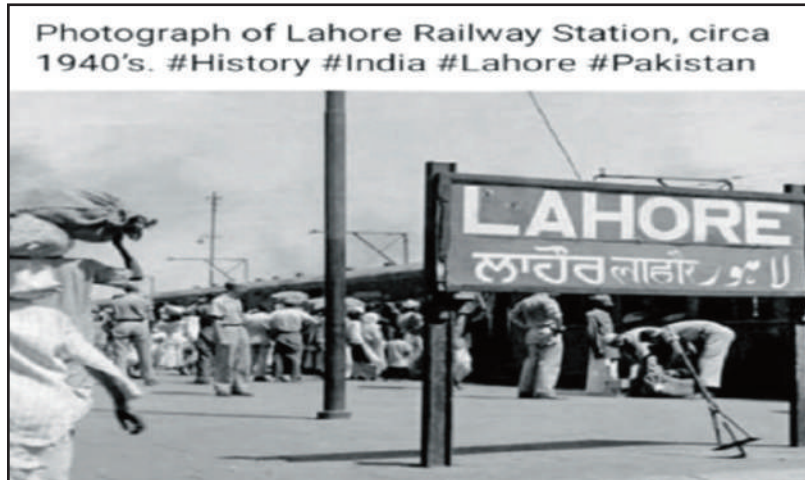
A mention must be made of experience from the life of Kanshi

tion to some mundane thing. This aggressive group, on lookout for Hindus, enquired if they had come across some 'shikar' (meaning Hindu) for 'target practice'. With instinct for survival, he played along with a negative response. That's how he lived on to tell his story, long after the partition.

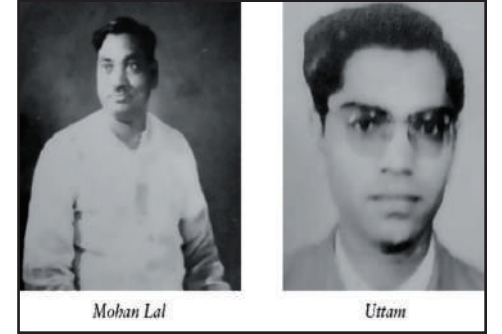
station around midnight. Hardly had the engine started picking up speed, indiscriminate firing started at the train from all directions. The brave driver never lost his nerve and speeded up the engine. The signals on the way



Mohan Lal, Ratan Devi, Jagdish and Kamal in lap. 1949



Photograph of Lahore Railway Station, circa 1940's. #History #India #Lahore #Pakistan



Mohan Lal

Uttam

filth engulfing the surroundings and yet the lotus (Kamal) was unaffected. On account of the complications at birth, the child had to be taken care of by the nursing staff, initially.

Ratan Devi's ordeal was not over, even when she returned home. Through her Hanuman Road bedroom window, she could not but observe horrendous scenes of people running, looting and plundering in broad daylight. She could not take her mind off some of the most macabre scenes of savagery and brutal violence seen from her window.

Recalling a specific chilling experience, she described having witnessed a headless body, running with momentum for a short distance, before falling like heap. Another person's skull had been split into two lying, limp and motionless, in a pool of blood. She had to be administered heavy sedation and kept under treatment/observation for some time.

The then domestic help Ram Dayal, once joined a rampaging mob, breaking through the Connaught Place shops' show windows, collecting booty in a sack, sharing with friends. The pervading atmosphere was of insecurity and horror. The family went through another chilling experience, which remains etched, as my earliest living memory, at an impressionable age of 5-years. One day a young man in bloodsoaked clothes, with a dripping dagger in hand, came running inside the house seeking protection and safety. He talked incoherently, mumbling in an emotion charged voice, words to the effect that he had finished off an enemy family. He was given a chance to clean up, provided a change of clothes and after a quick meal, whisked off en route to his destination.

There was so much insecurity and fear, that women staying in the complex got together, to prepare contingency plan, should some anti-social element manage to break in to the house. Their armoury included chili powder and poisonous items handy, to throw in to the eyes of the potential intruder, in addition to sharp knives and sticks. Mercifully that eventuality never happened. Sanity and normalcy re-

Ram, our mausaji and his miraculous escape from murderous rioting mob from Lahore, across Pakistan delineated border after the partition, in August 1947.

During World War II Kanshi Ram had joined the Agriculture Department of the United Punjab state. He was posted in Lahore. On the eve of partition communal tension engulfed the state. The area where he was living, was dominated by Muslim community. For the security of their



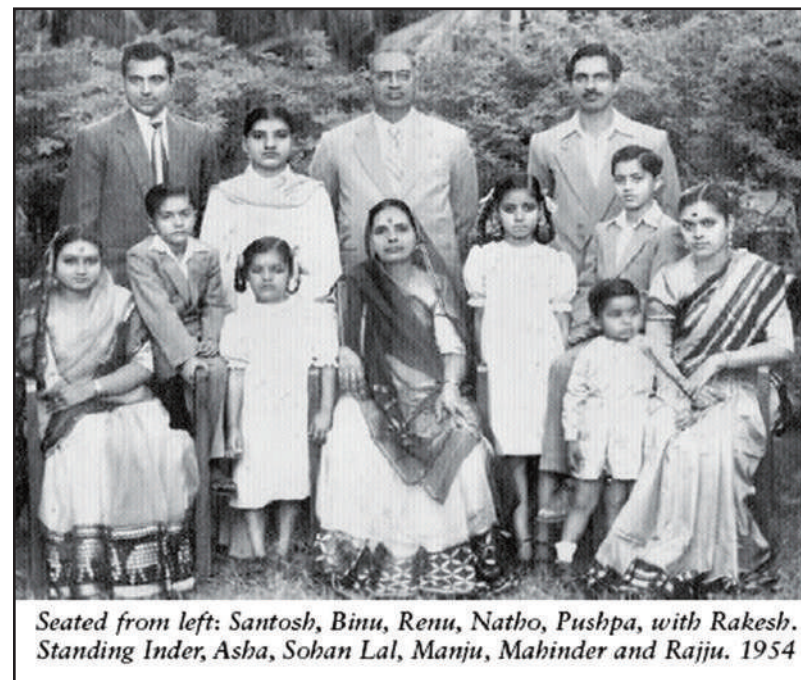
Sohan Lal

Kanshi Ram, who was in charge of the Stores, decided to stay back to manage things with depleted staff. During the next two days, the security situation deteriorated further. So, as contingency plan, the Hindu staff kept their luggage packed, ready to leave at short notice. On August 11, 1947 shooting in their locality resulted in 3 persons being shot dead. Ram was

in the office. The Director of Stores, an Englishman, advised him to leave immediately for his safety. He rushed back home to collect his belongings, only to find that it had been taken over, by a rampaging Muslim mob.

Kanshi Ram turned back and made his way to Lahore Cantonment Railway Station, to board a train for New Delhi, where his wife Shakuntala had taken shelter, with her sisters. It was a rainy day and he could hear the sound of shooting all around the area. The station was swarming with multitude of people, waiting to flee away to safer places. The train compartments on the platform were jam packed. For lack of space, people had climbed on to the top of compartments, anxiously waiting for the train to steam off. But the engine driver, guard and support staff, were nowhere to be found.

After an agonizing wait, an Anglo-Indian engine driver finally turned up, along with a Sikh guard. With patience running out, the train steamed off from Lahore Cantonment



Seated from left: Santosh, Binu, Renu, Natho, Pushpa, with Rakesh. Standing Inder, Asha, Sohan Lal, Manju, Mahinder and Rajju. 1954

families' Hindu groups had to do night vigilance duty by turn. As the date of independence/ partition approached, reports of Hindus being targeted on a massive scale started doing the rounds. Fearing bloodshed, they started sending their families to safer areas across the Indian border on August 8-9, 1947.

One late evening, while walking on a road near his home in Lahore around that time, he bumped into a fellow Hindu from the same area. Just then he saw some potential trouble makers, suspected to be from the hostile community, approaching from the opposing side. Sensing danger, he shushed his friend out, diverting atten-

were disregarded, never slowing down, till the train crossed through to the Indian border at Attari, en route to Amritsar, a distance of about 50 kms. During that harrowing journey, even fellow co-passengers started looking at each other with suspicious eyes about their loyalty.

From Amritsar, it took Kanshi Ram a couple of days more, changing trains on the way, till he reached Delhi, mercifully safe and sound. In a disheveled condition, wearing dirty soiled clothes, without bath for days and not having had proper food for three days, he landed at his sister-in-law's home. What a heavenly feeling it must have been for him, after a luxurious bath, wearing clean clothes, and being served hot nourishing home cooked food. Surrounded by an affectionate, warm and welcoming family, he forgot the ordeal he went through.

## Tragedy Strikes the Mohan Lal Family

In Uttam, Mohan Lal had a bright son, who on graduation from Delhi University, joined Ministry of External Affairs, as Cypher Assistant. His first foreign assignment was in the Embassy of India, Tokyo in 1948. On his transfer back to Delhi, he was married off to Sahib Pyari from Hathras. His addiction to alcohol, a habit he acquired during his Tokyo posting, proved his undoing.

Two incidents involving the son shattered Mohan Lal. A friend of Uttam's gave him a cheque to encash at a bank. On scrutiny, the bank clerk detected forged signature on it. Police were summoned. Handcuffed, he was marched to his home, for a search of the premises for any incriminating evidence. Nothing suspicious was found. Documents of his handwriting and signatures collected, did not match with the impressions on the cheque. He was set free without a charge, as approver. The guilty person was apprehended for criminal action. The family went through unnecessary trauma for Uttam's poor judgement.

The teenaged son Jagdish, under the influence of his friends, stole money from his father and ran away with them to Bombay for good time. His absence was discovered soon enough, as the fourth accomplice, who backed out at the last moment, gave away the Bombay escapade plan. Mohan Lal air-dashed to nab the runaway party at the railway platform on arrival, and brought them back.

Mohan Lal's health took a turn  
(Contd. on next page)

# Progression of the Nanig Ram family tree

(Continue from page 6)

for the worse, at this point of time. On heavy medication because of his diabetic condition, he had to get his daily dose of insulin injection, to keep sugar level under control. On the evening of September 19, 1952, he suffered a massive heart attack and died on the cinema premises.

**Sad, premature end of**

of the mighty! The loss of the family's prestige and reputation was huge. Nothing is permanent in life. Good name, standing and reputation, unless nurtured scrupulously by the succeeding generation, will pass away into oblivion. It makes for sad spectacle. Sohan Lal takes centre stage: Bombay dreams Nanig Ram's second son, Sohan Lal started off as a fine young

around. With no prospects in sight, hardly any money in pocket, going without food and no roof over head, he returned, crestfallen and frustrated, nowhere near the realisation of his dream.

In 1951 Sohan Lal, during a business trip visit to Bombay, took Inder along. Seeing no prospect of success as an actor, he tried other alter-

Sohan Lal led a contented life, which he lived to the maximum. Apart from managing the Cinema, he socialized actively with Delhi tinsel town fraternity, partying with gay abandon. He had a successful side business of financing, which enabled a comfortable lifestyle. He built his independent Bungalow in Hauz Khas, earmarking four independent portions for the sons,

where they all shifted eventually. Sadly, he lost wife Natho on May 17 1977 after a freak accident. When he himself passed away on November 4, 1982 Sohan Lal had ensured that his progeny would be well taken care of, with a comfortable fortune and assets.

**Taking the family name to the next level: Bankey Lal:**

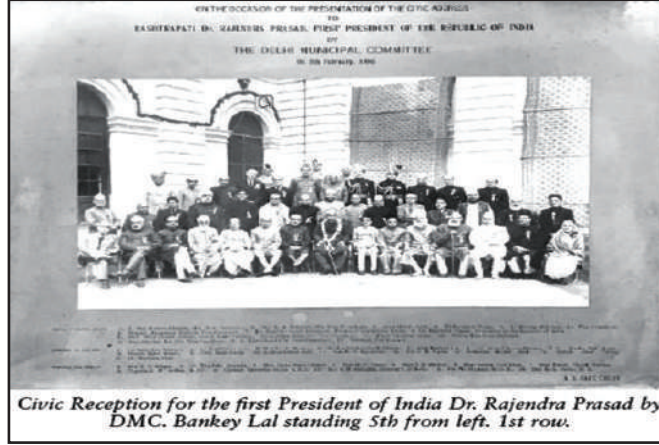
As the youngest born son to Indra Kaur and Nanig Ram in 1907-8, Bankey Lal (Chhote Bau ji)



Sohan Lal with grandchildren early 1980s



Bankey Lal



Civic Reception for the first President of India Dr. Rajendra Prasad by DMC. Bankey Lal standing 5th from left. 1st row.

**a dynamic personality.**

After his passing away, the situation in his branch of the family started falling apart. Ratan Devi went through a traumatic experience at a young age and did not know how to cope with it, going astray. Jagdish, was married off to Kiran on May 6, 1956. Uttam's career nosedived when he hit the bottle hard. His foreign posting to sensitive Indian diplomatic mission, Karachi was cancelled. He sadly

man. Handsome in appearance, he was by nature an extrovert with a sense of humour. He was fond of good things in life and knew how to indulge.

Entertainment sector in India got a boost with transition from silent to movie cinema in the 1930s. The tinsel town had so much to entice with glamour, showbiz, beauty, extravaganza, socialising/partying, big money and media blitz. The family had already opened the Imperial Theatre in New Delhi in the 1930s. Sohan Lal (Manjhle Bauji) took over marketing and liaison work with film distributors in Bhagirath Place, Chandni Chowk and Bombay. That got him access to tinsel town's sanctum sanctorum.

After visits to Bombay, Sohan

Lal established useful contacts in the film distributors' fraternity. This was the time when a huge dose of financing was needed, not just for producing films, but cinematography, infrastructure building in diversified fields. His next success was among financiers of films. There were fringe benefits through socializing, wining and dining. In such a film related atmosphere at home, it was natural that the next generation would be drawn to it.

Eldest son Inder, born on September 7, 1926 showed no interest in studies. Barely out of teens, he was getting a hard time from his tough father. Inder's restless soul did not let go of the dream of a career in the film industry. It drew him next to Bombay. He left home without telling anybody. Travelling by train ticketless, arriving in Bombay, not knowing a soul, his night halt was a bench at the Bombay railway station.

At the film studio, he could not penetrate the security cordon. A couple of days of frustrating wait convinced him of the futility of hanging

natives unsuccessfully. He had to return home disappointed and ended

up joining Alpana Cinema as Manager, after being jobless for long. In the



Seated Shila, BL, VB, Kishan Devi, Maya & Saroj. On ground RP, SB, Prabha, KB & Asha. 1951.

meanwhile, he got married to Santosh (June 22, 1953) who gave him two sons, Sunil and Sudhir and a daughter Madhu. He retired from that job in 1977 and led a quiet life, passing away in 1997.

Second son Mahender (b.5.3.1929) joined Imperial Cinema as Assistant Manager, got married to Manjit who gave him a son Anil and two daughters, Malti and Suman. He had a painful death from cancer on 5.1.1992. Sohan Lal's third son Rajender Pal (b.14.9.1944) joined a bank, eventually starting his own Security/Spy agency. From marriage to Chitra, he has a daughter Bhavna and two sons Gautam and Jagrit. The fourth son Virendra Pal (b.12.8.1947) was a banker, a fine gentleman. From marriage to Nitu, daughters Vaghisha and Nimisha were born. He passed away on 18.11.2009 prematurely.

Sohan Lal's eldest daughter Pushpa married Bishan Lal, who rose to the top position in the Income tax Appellate Tribunal. Baldev Rai, husband of second daughter Asha was from the Indian Audit and Accounts Service. Next daughter Manju married Sukhdev, an I.A.S. officer. Sohan Lal's youngest daughter Renu got married to Joginder, youngest brother of Baldev and Sukhdev. A rare case of three real sisters marrying three real brothers in the same family.

had to live in the shadow of his elder brothers.

During his years at a school in Delhi, an incident stood out in his memory. One day a friend, on way to school, enticed him to bunk class and instead play around on the surrounding hills at Pusa Road, feasting on red berries, growing up in the wild. After barely an hour or so, his conscience pricked, that while his parents expected him to be at school acquiring knowledge, he was wasting time, belying their trust. He cut short the escapade, vowing never to repeat such a foolish act again For reason of failing health, Nanig Ram was advised to take the fortified 'paya' soup, rich in bone marrow, prepared from the bones of goat's feet/limbs to regain his strength. Bankey Lal was tasked to fetch mutton parts for the purpose. He did not want to be seen hanging around the butcher's shop. So, he would hurriedly walk up to the place, order the item, toss a bag to pack it in and walk off quickly. He would return in due course, throw the required money, pick up the package and briskly dash off. Bankey Lal's poor health dogged him throughout his life. With poor immunity, he was susceptible to catching cold and infection easily. He started wearing spectacles from young age.

In 1925, at the age of 18 years, he was married off to Kishan (Contd. on next page)



Family function 1985. Seated from left Amma, Sujata, Maya, Shila and Kamlesh. Standing from left S.B, Chander, Anita with Medha, VB, Narendra, Bauji, Bharat and Rajiv.

passed away on account of complication, caused by cirrhosis of liver, on October 8, 1956. Jagdish followed the elder brother in binge drinking. He entered into relationship with his brother's widow. Triangular relationship endured somehow. With no parental control, he lost balance and turned to the bottle, as an escape. His end came on November 11, 1975. Youngest son Kamal was bound to be affected by the prevalent decadent atmosphere around. His lack of confidence and low self-esteem resulted in a stultified personality.

The sad part is that at her advanced old age Ratan Devi, was virtually abandoned to fend for herself. Those over whom she used to lord, and whose existence depended on her, left her high and dry. Finance was not the issue. It was sad to see her lying all by herself in a secluded corner, sick, infirm, lonely and miserable, with nobody to communicate with, far less take care.

It was a terrible way to pass away on 2nd August 2001. What a fall

# Progression of the Nanig Ram family tree

(Continue from page 7)

Devi (b 1912), with the 'gauna' ceremony deferred till 1928. In late 1930s and 1940s Bankey Lal family size increased. After Shila (born 1930) came Maya (Asha) in 1939. His first son to have survived was VB (born 1942). S.B. (b.1944), K.B. (1945), Prabha (1947), and Saroj (1949) followed in

(VB) joined the elite Indian Foreign Service. Second son (SB), worked first in the Customs Department and then State Bank of India, because of his prowess in hockey. KB's preference was for the legal profession, while the youngest Bharat opted for the private sector, settling eventually in the tourism field. Kamlesh, daughter of

tree, giving protection to us all. That sense of security was gone. For his barsi, during the shradh period for pind-daan on October 6, 2007, accompanied by the family, we went to Haridwar. In 2008 a hawan and prayer Sabha near his centenary of birthday was organized at Hanuman Road, attended by the extended family.

sum of money unexpectedly, from the sale proceeds, before vacating the premises.

As part of Nanig Ram's legacy, succeeding generations continue to bask in the glory of his name, fortune and assets, even when they did nothing to deserve it. That's the way luck factor plays out in some cases.



Bauji 100 years Barsi hawan 2008



Babu Nand Kishore



quick succession. Roopa (1951) and Bharat (1964) were later additions. By the 1940s Imperial Cinema was running smoothly as a joint family enterprise. It did not need three hands, full time. Eldest Mohan Lal controlled its efficient running. Other two brothers had to find their own calling. Sohan Lal tried his hands at financing/distributing films with his Bombay connection Bankey Lal's name was recommended to the Chief Commissioner (CC) of Delhi for the position of Honorary Magistrate in 1945. He prepared himself for it by a self-taught process, acquiring acumen of legal procedures through books and the court's language Urdu. He earned recognition and held the post continuously for approximately 10 years.

Delhi Municipal Committee (DMC), located in Chandni Chowk, had to be reconstituted in the post-Independence year 1947-48. The name of Bankey Lal as Municipal Councillor, came up for consideration. He had been an old resident of the city since the 1920s, during which the family made rich contributions to the emerging ethos and its social mix. With these impeccable credentials and social standing, he got a rightful place as Municipal Councillor. Though a disciplinarian, Bauji was a caring and affectionate father. He gave proper upbringing to his children, not ignoring the girls. He instilled the importance of education, knowledge and books, for personality development. He was generous in providing teaching aids and books for our asking.

Bauji's personal attention, love and affection made us cling on to him. During weekends and summer holidays, he would take us for morning walk to the Boat Club at Raj Path, and make us run barefoot on the dew laden lush green lawns for physical exercise. He encouraged us to play sports. He would take us to watch spectacle/drama, Circus shows, when performing near Red Fort. We looked forward to outings for picnics to Qutub Minar, Okhla bird sanctuary and lawns of India Gate. Those outings were heavenly.

We, the progeny tried to live up to his expectations. The eldest son

Chandigarh's I.D.Pawar was the chosen bride for VB (married 1968), Sujata for SB (m.1978) and Vandana for KB(m.1975) while Bharat himself selected Shumita (m1988) as life partner.

For the marriage of daughters, his choice was for civil servants. Husband of Shila (Anant Ram), Saroj (Swaran Das) and Roopa (Hans Raj) were I.A.S. officers, while Maya (Asha)'s husband (S.K.Chander) after joining IRS, retired as Presiding officer of the Income tax appellate Tribunal. Prabha's husband (Vikram Jeet) was District & Sessions Judge. In the 1970s Bankey Lal was busy sorting out partnership issues with the families of his two brothers. This involved complex joint family properties and running of Imperial Cinema. Luckily these were resolved with the help of Vimal Chandra. Physical demarcation of the prestigious 53, Hanuman Road property as mutually agreed upon.

A far-sighted person, Bankey Lal bought a plot of land in Hauz Khas Enclave and built a two storeyed house with an annex in late 1960s. It turned out to be a faultily demarcated plot from vastu point of view, with defective triangular formulation. Too late to do anything and so the place was rented out. His bad luck continued when the tenant, who defaulted in payment of rent, and left a hefty non-paid electricity bill. It took him time to recover from that nightmare. Just as I was in the process of settling down in Suva on a foreign posting, an urgent message from Delhi on December 7, 1989 conveyed that Bauji had suffered 2 heart attacks in quick succession. I rushed back to Delhi on December 9. In the intensive care unit of the hospital, he recognised me in that delirious state.

After spending barely 4 days in the hospital with him, on the morning of December 14, 1989 he breathed his last, at the age of 82 years. It was the end of an era. He was like a banyan



Dr. K.L.Muir

## D. Nanig Ram's daughters

### i) Jamuni's family

Jamuni was the first-born child in 1898 -99 to Nanig Ram and Indra. She was married off to Chunni Lal Sagar of Agra. By nature, unambitious and easy going, the husband showed no inclination for hard work. He expected his father-in-law to bail him out and lend financial support, to bring up his family. The eldest son Bhagwan was born in 1921, followed by Gulab (1927), Shakuntala (1929), Kishan (1931), Kamla (1933), Narendra (1935) and Ramesh (1937). For a start-up cottage industry venture, the required investment amount made available by wife's family was squandered away recklessly, ending in failure.

Nanig Ram had bought No 22 Hanuman Road plot for investment purpose. It had a vacant rear portion. In the absence of any alternative place, that's where Jamuni's family ended up being accommodated, on a no charge basis. Indulgent mother Indra Kaur kept helping the daughter with cash and personal jewelry, on a regular basis.

Seeing no other means of income on a sustainable basis, two of Jamuni's sons were given employment in the family-owned Imperial Cinema, as booking clerks. They were hardly loyal to that institution, from where money went missing, from under their charge. It had to be written off, so as not to adversely affect the family name. Even after Jamuni passed away in 1977, her progeny continued to enjoy the generosity from the maternal side. They became virtual owners of their possession at 22 Hanuman Road, as squatter's rights.

Division of the ancestral property among Nanig Ram's sons was adjudicated by the younger daughter Shanti's husband Vimal Chandra. As per the arrangement worked out 22, Hanuman Road was given to Mohan Lal family. They decided to dispose of it in the early 1990s. The descendants of Jamuni ended up richer by a tidy

### ii) Shanti, the loving daughter

The youngest child Shanti born (10th September 1923) was the darling of the family. She was educated, cultured and well accomplished in social graces. She found a perfect life partner in Vimal Chandra (born 6th November 1915), who joined Government service. He rose to be a senior influential bureaucrat, Director in the office of Commissioner of Scheduled Caste and Tribe, Home Ministry. Shanti and Vimal Chandra turned out to be an adorable couple. Shanti blended well within the husband's family with her affable personality, affectionate and warm nature. She was the anchor and rock-solid support system. She was well versed and had a good knowledge of religious/social customs and rituals.

The couple's eldest son Vinod, joined Government service, while Ashok migrated to Canada. The third son Deepak, after working for a public sector undertaking for a few years, also shifted to Canada with the family. Eldest daughter Shashi married Darshan Ram Nafri, an I.A.S. officer, while the younger one, Manjula married Surinder, who retired from

### Reserve Bank of India.

On November 10, 1984, Shanti passed away after a tragic road accident, followed by Vimal Chandra on February 21, 2004. Agra-The maternal connect To trace origin from mother's side, one has to go to Agra, the city of the famous Taj Mahal. To Birbal and Sunder were born two sons, Nand Kishore (1874) and Gian Singh (1878). From a modest beginning, Nand Kishore in the 1910s, was able to build up a mini empire in the footwear industry. A hard working and enterprising person, he got together a team of leather experts, shoe designers and craftsmen. Up until then the entire process in the production of shoes, involved hardly any machines but mostly handwork. The end results lacked symmetry and did not have a great finish.

### Nand Kishore-the entrepreneur

Nand Kishore, as a pioneer, introduced special machines, imported from England in the production line, in 1905. With sewing techniques im

(Contd. on next page)



# Progression of the Nanig Ram family tree

(Continue from page 8)

proved and mechanisation, the end result was durable and attractive. In the absence of competition, he had a field day capturing the market. In no time his Aryan Shoe Factory was busy fulfilling constant flow of orders from Lahore, Karachi, Bombay, the rest of India and abroad. At any given time 50 to 60 workers were hired to cater to the increasing demand. He acquired a 1000 sq yds plot of land in an area called Kazipada in Agra.

**aura of the family**

The surname of Muir was assumed by Kishan Lal and succeeding generations, tracing back ancestry to the golden Maurya empire era of India's ancient Indian history. He got married to Narayani in 1938. Around that time another entrepreneur, artisan Nanig Ram, had made his mark, not far from Agra.

For his second son Sohan Lal, he found perfect match in Nand Kishore's elder daughter Natho and

from Northampton College of Technology (1930-32). The extended stay of another year (1933) was utilised by Kishan Lal by undertaking a special course in leather tanning sector. On return, he joined his father's venture and helped introduce 'new cut technology' easy to wear shoes, in the fashion of 'loafer' range, in the factory. The new process combined hand sewing with machine processing. With this value addition, their product range commanded a premium in the market.

Gian Singh was a broken man, after the demise of his elder brother, followed by collapse of the institution he helped build. He tried hands at various things, none of which succeeded. He passed away on April 29, 1960. He drew comfort from the fact that his son Khub Singh, excelled himself by joining P.C.S. He made the family proud with his multi sided talent. An extrovert, he possessed qualities as an excellent marksman and an ace hunter (shikari). Following the family tradition,



Three sisters from right, Shakuntala, Kishan Devi and Natho with Narayani and Kishan Lal family



Mama Kishan Lal family 1960s



Shakuntala and Kanshi Ram. 1950s and in 1990s

The three-storey building had a workshop, factory and office on the ground and first floor and living quarters on top. From his marriage to Subhadra, Nand Kishore had five children. Kishan Lal (b.1902), Badri Prasad (b.1904), Natho (b.1907), Kishan Devi (b.1912) and Shakuntala (b.1921). His younger brother Gian Singh, was his partner and collaborator. From the latter's marriage to Sumer, he had 3 daughters- Chandrakala (1909), Iba (1912) and Kallo (1915) and one son Khub Singh (1925). They all lived together, as one happy family under the same roof.

Fortune smiled on Nand Kishore during First World War (1914-1919). Britain was a direct combatant in the hostilities, and as the colonial ruler in India, not only recruited Indian soldiers to fight on the eastern front on their side, but ordered huge supplies from India for the war effort. These included sturdy military boots, which could withstand the desert heat, marshy battleground on the one hand and extreme icy conditions in snow bound areas on the other. Local British administrator in Agra, an Englishman, was aware of the credentials and reputation of Nand Kishore in quality shoe production. He approached him for the immediate production and supply of military boots, as per the specifications provided. Nand Kishore, after evaluating the technical parameters, prepared a proto type, which was immediately approved. The rush job, keeping in view the scale of operations, was met within the prescribed delivery schedule. Constant flow of orders kept the factory busy. The product became a hit and he earned handsome profit. His prestige grew overnight. He became Sarpanch of scores of mandis/puras (areas) sorting out civil disputes and dispensing justice in a fair manner. He was inducted as member of the local Ram Lila Committee, which used to host Dussehra Ramlila dramas and Diwali festivities.

**The surname Muir adds to the**

their marriage was solemnised around 1921. On one of Sohan Lal's visits to 'inlaws in Agra, younger brother accompanied him. Back in those days, water for domestic consumption was usually drawn from nearby wells. For Bankey Lal, who was to take bath alongside the well, it was the pretty younger sister Kishan Devi, who drew water buckets for him. He liked her instantly.

In the meanwhile, Nanig Ram had bagged contracts for some aspects of construction of prestigious Government buildings after Sohan Lal's marriage to Natho. Ram gave credit to the new daughter-in-law, as lucky mascot for bagging the contract. He was more than happy to approach Nand Kishore for second daughter Kishan Devi's hand, for Bankey Lal. The matter was pursued and the two got married in December 1925.

With cash flow swelling the coffers, it was time to indulge in a bit. Both brothers were amateur musicians. Nand Kishore was a singer, while Gian Singh accompanied him on the sarangi. The two of them used to enthrall the gathering with their 'jugalbandi' in unison, on many cultural occasions.

To celebrate the newly acquired wealth and social status, the two brothers took to drinking. At some stage, they would argue and fight over trifles, like why the peg of a drink was not served in equal measure to both. After getting sozzled, sometimes they would lose control and exchange physical blows. On one particular occasion, it resulted in a drinking partner being accidentally pushed off the roof, resulting in serious injury. But the beauty of it all was that, the following morning it was back to normal, as if nothing had happened the previous evening.

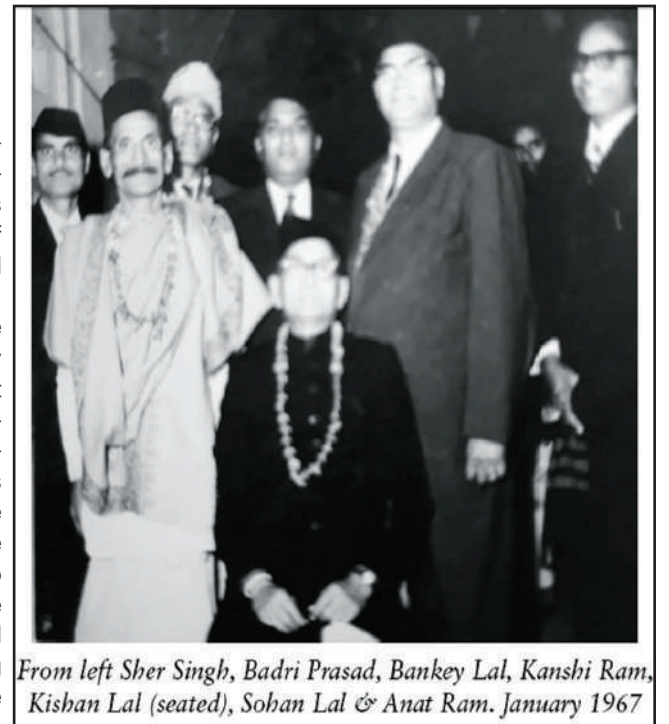
The money made from the thriving business for once was usefully utilised, when with the help of an English administrator, eldest son Kishan Lal was sent to England to earn advance diploma in footwear technology

**Decline of the establishment**

As it usually happens, after reaching commanding height, a fall was inevitable. As a result of their erratic lifestyle and drinking bouts, control and surveillance on the assembly line gradually eased up. The resultant laxity meant quality control was not strictly enforced. Competitors conceived of a sabotage plot. Some workers were bought over, leading to pilferage, mishandling the installed machinery and deliberately producing shoddy products. There

was burglary in the factory, resulting in huge losses. Soon the venture went into the red. The health of Nand Kishore started deteriorating during this downward trend and he passed away in April 1939. But not before he got his youngest daughter Shakuntala (1921) married off to Kanshi Ram (7.10.1917) on April 29 1937.

After Nand Kishore passed away, the business took a nosedive and could barely survive. Kishan Lal moved to a government job, as Chief Surveyor of Leather industry in U.P. During World War 2, he assumed charge of Assistant Director, in the office of Director General of Supplies and Disposal. For a brief period he joined the inner circle of youngsters, personally mentored by the great Baba Saheb Dr. B.R.Ambedkar. He was appointed Principal, Government Leather Institute Kanpur in 1941, where he stayed on till his retirement in 1959-60. His authoritative book "Charam Kala", became an excellent reference and source material. Only the younger son Badri Pershad, showed no inclination for studies concentrating on his hobby as a wrestler. He could not make a mark in life.



From left Sher Singh, Badri Prasad, Bankey Lal, Kanshi Ram, Kishan Lal (seated), Sohan Lal & Anat Ram. January 1967

he turned into a superb singer. Above all, an able administrator. After a successful career Khub Singh passed away prematurely on 29.7.1983.

His granddaughter Niharika, became 2nd Runner Up for Miss India World title. Another one, Aditi Singh Shamra, who is Rita Singh's daughter, is the reigning rock star singer of Bollywood.

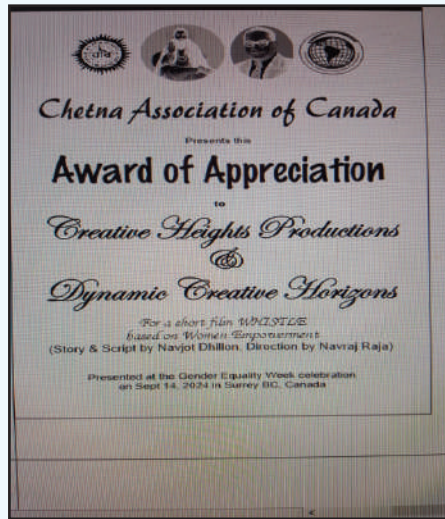
**Daughter Shakuntala's challenges**

Nand Kishore's youngest daughter Shakuntala's husband Kanshi Ram, hailed from Hindon in Rajasthan. After the 1857 revolt, his grandfather and uncle fought in the Anglo-Afghan War, for which they were given land around Lahore by the British. He joined the Agriculture Department of the United Punjab state, based in Lahore. At the time of partition, as a result of communal carnage, they had to flee from the Muslim dominated Lahore in August/September 1947.

Kanshi Ram was assigned by his parent Agriculture Department, to the newly built Punjab Capital of Chandigarh. That is where they settled down after retirement. The only thing missing in their lives was a child.

(Contd. on next page)

# Screening of Whistle, a short film on women empowerment for the Gender Equality Week



by Jai Birdi

"Whistle", a 9 minute short film directed by Navraj Raj based on a story/script by Navjot Dhillon was screened on Saturday, September 14 by Chetna Association of Canada in the Dr. Ambedkar Room at Surrey Center Library. It was arranged as a part of the upcoming Gender Equality Week (September 22 to 28, 2024). The venue was selected because of the long standing partnership between Chetna Association of Canada and the Surrey Libraries going back to 2012 when the room in the honor of Dr. Ambedkar was first named.

"Whistle", a joint production of Creative Heights Productions and Dynamic Creative Horizons, explored beliefs and taboos using blowing whistles as a symbol where girls are told that: "girls don't blow whistles". The film effectively brings forward many other actions that girls and women are told not to do and thereby, limits the potential of women.

The screen of the film was well aligned with the 2024 theme of the Gender Equality Week: Unlocking potential: Economic Power through Gender Equality.

After the screening, the organizers, the audience, and emerging new filmmakers had interactive dialogue about the film, gender equality, the progress made by women, and further ideas from maximizing the potential of women. The filmmakers and the team were recognized and presented with an award for making the film and initiating dialogue on women empowerment.

Updates on Chetna Association of Canada's "Project Equality" and the anti-caste movement were also shared. Param Kainth of AICS Canada and RashpaulBharadwaj of AISRO Canada were also present and acknowledged for their support in taking forward the Project Equality.

Makhan Tut, founder of Mamta Foundation of Canada, an organization that supports and em-

powers abandoned children to receive education and maximize their potential, also spoke on the occasion. He also shared situations where girls, in Canada, were killed, as an act of honor killing, for marrying without the consent of their families.

TarlokSablok, an actor in the film and recipient of the King Charles Coronation Medal, shared the importance of empowering girls and women. Sablok also encouraged promoting the teachings of Dr. Ambedkar, known as the Father of Indian Constitution.

Photos:

1. Award presentation - Reminder Dosanjh, founder of India Mahila Association; Manjit Bains, Chair, Women Empowerment Committee, Chetna Association of Canada; and, Santosh Bhatti, Ben's Appliances, presented the award to Navjot Dhillon who received it on behalf of the film team. Dhillon was joined by actors TarlokSablok, Harp Naaz, Baani, and Nimrit Sidhu.

# Progression of the Nanig Ram family tree

(Continue from page 9)

Shakuntala did conceive twice but suffered miscarriages.

That void in their lives always rankled them. After his death on 15.8.1996 Shakuntala felt terribly lonely and went into depression. She kept on moving from one place to another, without finding peace and stability, finally landing up in Agra with her younger brother Badri's family. That

is where she passed away in 2004.

The enduring legacy of the nanihal in Agra

For our generation, Agra is the

nanihal, the place where our mother, Kishan Devi was born and brought up.



Kishan Devi singing wedding folk songs at Sanjay wedding 1991

Her attachment to Agra was abiding, going back to her roots often. The values she imbibed at her ancestral place were duly passed on to us. She was a

gourmet cook, famous for dishing out the tastiest food from her magical



Mami Prem Khub Singh & Rita

hands. And through her, we remained connected to Agra.

Amma made sacrifices to give us children the best she could in the

upbringing process. She was a cultured person, adept in the art of

singing. No marriage celebration in the family would be complete without her repertoire of melodious rendering of folk and religious songs. Deeply religious, Kishan Devi inculcated in us fine spiritual values. My generation

would be eternally be grateful to the city that gave us our mother. Thank

you, Agra, for bestowing the greatest gift of Amma.

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Dr. Paramjit S Takhar, MD



Goodie Takhar, PhD

# Renaming of a street in Broadway, New York as Shri Guru Ravidass Marg



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