

Arjan Singh: the making of a hero*

Ancestry & Moral Tradition

ROOPINDER SINGH

ARJAN SINGH'S GRANDFATHER Risaldar Bhagwan Singh had moved to Lyallpur district from Amritsar district since the land there was well irrigated by canals. This was a part of the terrestrial magnetism of post Khalsa Raj in Late nineteenth century when people moved from eastern Punjab to the western districts because of the extensive irrigation network developed by the Punjab government called 'canal colonies'. Often a number of families from a particular village would migrate *en-mass* and form a new village that would share its name with the original one. Thus, the village in Lyallpur district was an offshoot of Kohali village, near Amritsar. Other members of Risaldar Bhagwan Singh's family also settled in the village.

Bhagwan Singh's son Kishan Singh did not stay in the village. He studied in Lyallpur and then earned his B.Sc. degree at Khalsa College, Amritsar, where the legendary G. A. Wathen was Principal. He then went to England soon after Arjan Singh's birth in 1919 and spent four years in Edinburgh University, Scotland, where he studied civil engineering. On the way back, his ship docked at Colombo and he promptly enlisted as engineer in Ceylon (Sri Lanka) Railways. "I was in school at that time and I remember that I used to get a pass that entitled even us children to travel First Class."

Arjan Singh has fond memories of his grandfather. He was still a child when his grandfather died: "I was young when he passed away and I remember that the funeral procession had a brass band in it, since the custom those days was that if someone died at a ripe old age, the death was "celebrated." We weren't landlords but we were quite comfortably placed."

mEII DrqI The Good Earth: Asked to recollect his childhood, Arjan Singh says: **"I was always fascinated by aeroplanes. I first saw them when they flew over our village near Lyallpur, *en route* from Lahore to Karachi, and I knew that I wanted to be in those planes."**

He studied in the Government High School, Montgomery, which was the better school in the region. He particularly remembers his schoolmate Justice Manmohan Singh Gujral, who now lives in Chandigarh. Arjan Singh learned to swim in a canal that was located between his family's farm and the school, college, university and the 'provincial' swimming teams. He held two long-distance national records in freestyle swimming – one mile and half mile.

Manmohan and Arjan Singh joined Government College, Lahore, together. He stayed in the hostel called the "Quadrangle" since it was economical and nearer the swimming pool. He would swim 20-30 lengths every morning and then attend classes. Professor Ward from Cambridge was his favourite professor, but he lost contact with him after leaving the college. "My wife and I went especially to Cambridge in 1950 to trace him, but we could not, even though we went to his last known address. A lady living in the next house told us that he went to fight in World War II and never returned." He also remembers Professor G. D. Sondhi, who became the Principal later. He also recalls Professor Kasim, his tutor at the college. Though proud of his college colours in swimming, *gatka*, athletics and *kabaddi*, Arjan

earnestly pursued his studies. He earned an Inter-Art degree, FA, for which he also studied mathematics and physics.

Air-Borne: When he was in the fourth year for Degree, he was selected for the Indian Air Force, and had to leave college a few months before he finished his BA. Along with six or seven students from Lahore, he had taken the defence examination at Metcalf House, Civil Lines, Delhi. Five were selected. The group included Prithipal Singh of the Princely House of Patiala.

In 1938, traveling to England was a longish but enjoyable voyage. The P&O liner sailed across the high seas, passing through Aden, the Suez Canal and Gibraltar. Arjan Singh and Prithipal Singh, with another cadet from India, took a liner and reached England for their training. "When we joined Cranwell, Prithipal was number one, but by the time we passed out, I came first." They were the only "foreigners" in UK. Arjan Singh had to put in an extra effort at speaking English.

mEilAw Awkws - Air of Royalty: The emphasis in training was on the development of one's character in order to become a good officer. The training involved not just flying, but much more than that. Among those who left lasting impression on Arjan Singh were Sergeant Harries, the flying instructor, and Squadron Leader D.A. Boyle, the Chief Flying Instructor, who was later knighted and became Marshal of the Royal Air Force.

Life at Cranwell involved studying a lot of mathematics, physics, electronics and engineering, without any social life when the college was in session. During weekends the cadets went to London to meet friends, though often the British cadets would invite the Indians to their homes on weekends. They remained in touch with each other for decades, especially the much decorated Marshal of the Royal Air Force Sir John Grandy, and the late Marshal of the Royal Air Force Lord Samuel Charles Elworthy, a New Zealander. Both were his opposite numbers when he was India's Chief of Air Staff.

Character & Ethics: Arjan Singh has kept his flying log book in which his entire flying career is noted. An early entry shows the meticulous care and ethical standards they exercised in those days. When Boyle noticed that blue and black inks had been used for making entries in the log book, he observed: "By using the same ink and the same pen, you would improve the appearance of the log book." He was awarded colours in swimming, athletics and hockey, and was the Vice-Captain of the teams for these sports.

Clouds of War: When the Second World War began in Europe in September 1939, Arjan's training was cut short due to the shortage of pilots in the Air Force and they were commissioned in December, 1939. There was a shortage of pilots everywhere – in the Royal Air Force in Britain and the Indian Air Force, which had just one squadron at Ambala. Prithipal Singh and Arjan Singh joined the squadron in January 1940. this Indian squadron had been formed on April 1, 1933 at Drigh Road, Karachi by the first batch of airmen, who were called the Hawai Sepoys and a few officers (including Subroto Mukherjee, who later became the first Indian Air Chief) and was commanded by an RAF officer. Originally, it had four Westland Wapitis (a fabric bomber/reconnaissance biplane, typical of the RAF aircraft during the inter-war period). The joining of these two officers brought the squadron to its full strength in 1940.

From Ambala, a flight of No. 1 Squadron went to Karachi and then to the North West Frontier Province (NWFP). This was close to the Durand Line; the terrain dictated the style of fighting much as it does in today's conflict in that area. There were no big targets that could be hit. **The Pathans hid in caves and valleys and took pot-shots at prowling aircraft, occasionally managing to disable some. Arjan Singh also was the target once.**

Survival: To hear the story from Arjan Singh of how he once had to crash-land is to learn the process of initiation into the business of war. "At that time, the British idea was not to take over the area and have complete administrative control, but to give a live target and operational training to the soldiers. My experience is that unless you see the bullets coming towards you and some hitting you, you don't have the experience of war. The first few times that you have these bullets hitting the aircraft, you are afraid. I was afraid."

"In 1940, my Hawker Audax was shot down in the NWFP by the tribal Pathans sharpshooters. I crashed in a dry hilly stream where a fight was going on between the British/Indian troops, on the one side, and the Pathans, on the other. My gunner, Gulam Ali, was injured in the crash. I stayed with him till we both could be evacuated. Gulam Ali has eventually settled down in Germany. I was in touch with him until a few years ago." The incident is dismissed casually. "But it was not much, within two weeks I was flying again – in the same area. Our skirmishes in the NWFP, I think, prepared us for the Air War, later on, against the Japanese." Arjan Singh maintains that operations over the mountains and valleys of the NWFP prepared him to face the tougher campaign against the Japanese during 1944 on the Eastern front. He says: "One always has nerves at the beginning but after a few operational sorties, it becomes a routine affair and the fear almost disappears." He flew a total of 128 hours in operations over the Frontier Province.

Stuff of Legends: It was as a Squadron Leader that he first met Teji, the lady who became his wife. He had flown from Kohat to Delhi to attend a Squadron Commanders' Conference on November 22, 1943, in which his old class fellow, Squadron Leader Prithipal Singh, and the legendary Squadron Leader Mehar Singh and squadron Leader K.K. (Jumbo) Majumdar were also participating. (Unfortunately, Prithipal Singh and Majumdar died in 1945 in Hurricane crashes and Mehar Singh died in a civilian aircraft crash after retiring from the IAF).

In Delhi, Arjan Singh was staying in the house of Partap Singh, who was a builder and partner of Sir Sobha Singh, one of the most prominent builders of Delhi. Partap Singh had also studied in Arjan Singh's *alma mater*, Government College, Lahore. As Teji recalls, the late Air Marshal Subroto Mukherjee had requested my father, who was a good friend, to accommodate various officers in Delhi for the conference."

Matrimony: The pretty, young and petite Teji, and the tall, handsome Sardar met, and the rest, as they say, is history. They continued meeting each other, often playing a game of table tennis. To quote Arjan Singh, he "waited for her to grow up." A Pontiac played its part. "It was a huge car, and I thought that he had bought it to impress me," remembers Teji, who was studying in the Convent of Jesus and Mary then.

South Asian Front: The situation in S. Asia was precarious since the Japanese strategy in World War II was to enter India through the east. They

had already conquered South-East Asia, including Burma, and had laid a siege to the Imphal Valley. The only land route – Dimapur, Kohima, Imphal – had been cut off by the Japanese. All the forces in the valley were supplied by transport aircraft, mostly by the American Air Force, diverted from the other task of supplying the forces of Chiang Kai-Shek “over the Hump” of the 18,000 to 22,000 ft. above sea level high mountain ranges between Assam and China.

The squadron was stationed in the valley. It played a major role in helping the Indian/British Army fighting in the valley to withstand the siege and overpower the Japanese forces. There was a healthy rivalry between the RAF and the IAF, and this gave the IAF a chance to prove that they were as good as the RAF, if not better, at fighting against well-established enemies. This they did by flying long and dangerous hours and relentlessly hitting the enemy troops.

Air Chief P. C. Lal in his book *My Years with the IAF*, published in 1986, says: “The first person to actually see the Japanese in the northern part of Imphal was Squadron Leader Arjan Singh. He had been on a sortie, attacking the Japanese elsewhere and he was coming back to base in the afternoon flying his aircraft solo at that time. Coming back to circuit and land at his base, he saw on a hilltop overlooking the airfield a number of men in a strange uniform that did not resemble any uniform or any men of the Indian Army. So he went close to have a look and recognised them as Japanese troops.... He immediately called his entire squadron on his own initiative. The other aircraft that were on the ground were also made ready to go. He was the first to attack the Japanese, who had actually arrived on the outskirts of Imphal.” **Documents published later had shown that this attack by the whole squadron, i.e. 16 aircraft was the turning point and final reversal of their ambitious plan to capture the valley.**

P. C. Lal, who followed Arjan Singh as Chief of Air Staff, writes: “His leadership had a distinct style: quiet courage, no flamboyance, firmness with a ready smile. He and his boys were the heroes of Imphal. He had done a great job.”

Heroism of the Aerial Kind: The leadership of Squadron Leader Arjan Singh was noticed and he was given the immediate award of the Distinguished Flying Cross (DFC) in May, 1944, by Lord Louis Mountbatten, Supreme Allied Commander of South-East Asia during World War II. **The event was commemorated with a small ceremony at the airfield itself. Lord Mountbatten addressed the Squadron while standing on the wing of Squadron Leader Arjan Singh’s Hurricane and pinned the DFC on his chest.** “I was dressed in my jungle fatigues,” remembers the Marshal. “It did not come as a complete surprise. He gave us about two hours notice, we gathered some officers and airmen of the squadron, but we did not stop the operations even then. For a young man to get such a medal in front of his own squadron is a great satisfaction. I was a part of the squadron, at Imphal and they were a part of me. Even now, I am in touch with at least five of the people who were with me in Imphal, three of them are Airmen and two are officers.”

Heading IAF: Arjan Singh was in the Air Headquarters when the Chinese invasion in 1962 took place. **As Arjan Singh recalls: “It was not because of the fighting ability of our soldiers that we suffered, it was because of bad leadership in the Army and political interference.” It was decided that the Air Force should not play a fighting role in this war, because once the air forces**

get involved, it ceases to be a limited engagement. As it turned out, the Air Force did play a 'non-fighting' role in logistic support and in evacuating wounded soldiers. **Even though he was not in command, Arjan Singh says the air Force was prepared to fight and the Chinese advance would have been much restricted had the Air Force also participated in that operation.**

Arjan Singh took over as Chief of the Air Staff (CAS) on July 15, 1964, and within a year came the most testing time of his life.

Pakistani forces infiltrated into Kashmir in August, 1965, and later attacked the Chhamb-Jaurian sector with regular army formations on September 1, 1965. It was a fierce attack in which a Pakistani force of two infantry brigades and two armoured regiments were involved. The 3rd Mahar battalion bore the brunt of the attack. They were supported by a squadron of tanks of the 20th Lancers, but there was no artillery support since the enemy shelling had damaged and dislocated some of our artillery.

The army in Kashmir sent a request for air support at 11 am. General J. N. Chaudhury, Army Chief at the time, asked the Air Chief if the Air Force could help. Both the service chiefs went to the Defence Minister, Y. B. Chavan, who gave the permission within a few minutes. He asked the CAS: "Can you do it?" As he recalls, the CAS replied: "We just can. If you give orders now, we may be able to attack before night." The urgent note was justified because it was 4 pm when the order was issued and the Indian Air Force lacked night vision equipment and the attack would be launched in twilight, which would be risky.

Chavan gave the orders, though, as he recorded in his diary: "Had no time to consult ECC or prime Minister. Time was a vital factor. Took decision on their (the chiefs) advice and asked them to go ahead." Chavan maintained a diary and his records have been printed in *Debacle to Revival: Y B Chavan as Defence Minister 1962-65* by R D Pradhan, the Defence Minister's aide.

The air attack was launched from Pathankot, near the border of Jammu and Kashmir that day. Vampires of World War II vintage were also used for the sorties in addition to Mysteres and Gnats.

The first wave of four Vampires took off at 1719 hrs, as soon as they got orders. They inflicted considerable damage on the enemy tanks, though they also attacked, by mistake, some of our own Army positions and troops. One Vampire was lost to ground fire in this attack. The second wave of four Vampires was attacked by Sabre jets which were vastly superior in performance and armament, and three Vampires were lost in that attack, with one managing to escape. The fourth wave did not encounter any aircraft and attacked enemy troops, armour and vehicles.

The war escalated and the Indian Army and Indian Air Force performed well as can be judged from some of the headlines in the various newspaper during the period as well as from Chavan's diary: *The Indian Express* on September 2, 1965 reported: IAF Planes go into Action, 10 Pakistani Patton Tanks Destroyed. Enemy Offensive Repulsed." **Chavan's observations on Septembers 3, 1965 were: "This day began with a gift from the IAF. CAS came to my residence with the news that the IAF, in the morning air battle, had shot down an F-86 in the Chhamb sector...."** Three days later, the Defence Minister told Parliament: "The House is undoubtedly proud of the performance of our boys in the Air Force who have destroyed several Pakistani Sabre jets."

On September 12, 1965 Chavan wrote: “CAS is given OK for Peshawar. When he is asked to go ahead on a new task, CAS walks as a dancing bird. A real fighting Sikh: and yet how soft and gentle.” Ten days later, he was to say: “Army and Air Force have become now for us the symbols of our national pride and glory. A great day for me. A great day for Chaudhury (the Army Chief) and Arjan Singh... Air Marshal Arjan Singh is a jewel of a person; quietly efficient and firm, unexcitable but a very able leader.”

Politics Stymie Initiative: During the war, the Indian Air Force penetrated deep into Pakistani territory and attacked military targets around Peshawar, Quetta, Rawalpindi, Sargodha and other Pakistani cities. As many as 72 trains and many vehicles were attacked, disrupting the Pakistani army’s supply lines. They scrupulously followed Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri’s instructions to attack military targets only.

As the war progressed, the pilots’ confidence increased. Initially, there had been some doubts, about the ability of the indigenous Gnats against the highly sophisticated American-built Sabres, but even those flying the Gnats showed a lot of élan, particularly after they shot down two Sabres of the Pakistani Air Force in the initial days of war. *The Statesman* on September 4, 1965 gave a banner headline: “Two Pakistani Sabre Jets Downed.”

It was a short war. Mainly under international pressure, a UN brokered cease-fire was announced on September 23, 1965. The Army had conquered considerable Pakistani territory, and the war had seen the biggest tank battles since World War II. Yet the fighting men were itching for more. However, a stalemate in land fighting had been reached. As Arjan Singh says: “**The 1965 war was too short for us. I was disappointed when the ceasefire was announced because in my opinion the war was going on well for us. We were able to attack every target in Pakistan, while they could not send planes beyond Ambala! They could not even reach Delhi, let alone Mumbai or Ahmedabad. We had minimal casualties in the Air Force.**”

Other accounts suggest that even the Army was not in a mood for a cease-fire, as it had captured substantial Pakistani territory, though, of course, its supply lines were stretched because an invasion takes a lot more resources than defence. Defence Minister Chavan had also supported the military stand.

Both the army Chief and the air Chief were awarded the Padma Vibhushan. Thus, the CAS got the award at the age of 46. His rank was raised to that of Air Chief Marshal by a grateful nation, although he says: “Personally, I didn’t think that I deserved either of them, since I wasn’t quite satisfied with what we did in the 1965 war. Given some more time, we would have done far better.”



In Switzerland as a diplomat

APPOINTED AS AMBASSADOR TO Switzerland in 1971, Arjan and Teji felt very much at home, having first visited the country in 1938. The Indian embassy in Bern had a compact staff of less than a dozen Indian officials, including Chokila Iyer, who

was his First Secretary, Political, and later became the Foreign Secretary of India. During his tenure, in Switzerland, the 1971 war with Pakistan, which resulted in the creation of Bangladesh, took place. He explained India's position to the Swiss and also managed to get various kinds of loans and weapons from them. He particularly remembers the Swiss for the fact that they would stick by their word, no matter what.

Teji Arjan Singh remembers Bern as a quite place. "In fact when we were being sent to Switzerland, I thought we would be sent to Geneva. You don't think of Bern as the capital. Switzerland has 26 cantons, or states, and we must have visited at least 20 or 22 of them. In some places we went, they said that the Indian Ambassador has not visited the canton for 20 years! They would ask us with surprise: "Have you been to all the cantons?" To which I would reply, 'Yes,' thinking that the whole country was as big as one Indian state. He used to go to France to play golf by just crossing over the border for that."

Arjan Singh concurrently served as the Ambassador to the court of Pope Paul VI at the Vatican. Pope Paul VI had visited India in 1964 and knew a lot about the country. As Arjan Singh recalls: "We used to have a lot of discussions and he liked me. People often wondered what a military man was doing with a man of peace! He was always very low-key, but was quite interested in India, Pakistan, and East Pakistan (Bangladesh) and the people there. He was concerned about how India would cope with 10 million refugees on its land, and even the kind of problems that would arise when so many refugees were left behind." He had a very bare office, just a simple table, and a few paintings on the wall. When ladies met him, they had to cover their heads.

As High Commissioner to Kenya

AFTER THE FULL TERM OF A THREE-YEAR stint in Switzerland, Arjan Singh was appointed High Commissioner to Kenya in 1974. This was a time of flux in Africa since neighbouring Ugandan President Idi Amin had thrown all Asians out of his country, as a result of which the vast Indian diaspora in Africa was feeling rather insecure, with many migrating to the West.

At that time, Kenya was led by Jomo Kenyatta, a distinguished statesman and the first President of independent Kenya. Under him the Kenyans wanted the people of Indian origin to stay, since most were professionals and many of the tea estates were owned by them. In a way, what happened in Uganda created a better environment for Indians in Africa, though many did migrate. Kenyatta was broadminded and even though the freedom movement had started because the best land was with the British and other Europeans, they were not ousted but were asked to stay on. In fact, there were more British living in Kenya 10 years after independence than before it, a tribute to the fair-minded policies of the independent government of former colonial state.

Ambassador Arjan Singh was quite friendly with President Arap Moi, who succeeded Kenyatta after his death in 1978. "I used to go to his farm in Nakuru, 130 miles from the capital Nairobi. My emphasis was to get to know the local people. Unfortunately, my experience is that various Ambassadors get to know each other better – having parties at each other's places – than the local people. They mostly met among themselves, though they are sent to make contact with the local people and know their issues, problems, etc." While in Kenya, he was also High

Commissioner to Seychelles where the Indian community numbered a thousand or so in a population of around 75,000. He partly attributes his success in Kenya to his golf, which he used to play with three or four ministers, as well as several top bankers and industrialists.

At the end of his term as ambassador to Kenya, the Singhs returned to New Delhi and lived a “retired” life, keeping in touch with their friends and family, and taking care of the children, who had now grown up. They moved to their house in Delhi’s diplomatic enclave, Chanakyapuri, and thus began a “holding pattern” when Arjan Singh’s day consisted of playing golf and meeting people.

Public Service

THE KIND OF EXPERIENCE and ability that Arjan Singh possessed was needed again and again by the government and thus came a stint as a Member of the Minorities Commission (1978-1981). His job was to look after the problems of the minorities in India. As he says of his tenure, **“There were not too many problems of the Sikhs, since by nature they are problem-solvers themselves. However, I must point out that the Muslim community does have many problems of marginalisation.”** He was also the Chairman of the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Delhi, from 1980-1983, where he guided one of the premier technical education institutes of the country.

Asked about his position as a Director of Grindlays Bank for six years, Arjan Singh chuckles and says that it was mainly because he has had an account with the bank since 1935 when he first banked with them in Lahore. Actually, it was more a tribute to his multifarious achievements and the larger-than-life presence that he lent to the boardrooms.

When the anti-Sikh massacre took place, he along with other prominent Punjabis, like journalist-diplomat Kuldeep Nayar and writer Patwant Singh, **formed a joint forum and went to the then President Giani Zail on November 1, 1984, to ask him to call out the Army without delay. “He attempted to contact the Prime Minister and the Home Minister but without success. Unfortunately, the deployment of the Army was delayed till the evening. As a result, many lives were lost. It was a politically inspired situation which went out of control by omission and commission and I do not blame any particular community for it,” he says. Marshal Arjan Singh was actively involved with the relief measures, including disbursement of money to needy persons.**

His posting as Delhi’s Lieutenant-Governor by the V. P. Singh government near the end of 1989 was the first civil post that Arjan Singh held. He had a competent team and, in fact, the present Lieut-Governor of Delhi, Vijai K. Kapoor, was his Chief Secretary. He is candid enough to admit that he didn’t have the depth of knowledge required despite having lived in Delhi for so long. But since he liked to see things for himself, he was able to do much.

At that time there was no elected government and thus the Lieut-Governor had a lot to do. “I was able to help people during my tenure, though I held the post only for a year. **It was during this period that the road signs also came up in Punjabi as Punjabis constitute more than 14 per cent of the population of Delhi.”**

Ever a farmer at heart, he ensured that a fixed minimum rate of compensation was declared for the farmers whose land was bought by colonisers or the Delhi Development Authority. The tenure was a short one since Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar indicated that he wanted his own man as Lieut-Governor and Arjan Singh resigned in December 1990.

Epilogue

MARSHAL OF THE INDIAN AIR FORCE Arjan Singh has come out with flying colours no matter what life gave him, and most of the time it gave him a good break. He effortlessly transcends stereotypes. This teetotaler gung-ho fighter is not only a committed soldier but also a diplomat. He is wedded to his profession, and also devoted to his family. During his service in the IAF, he has landed on 178 airfields and has flown 65 kinds of aircraft and helicopters, the last one being a MIG 21. Even as he has soared in stature and rank, he is famous for keeping his feet on the ground. His competence and leadership have been underscored by his warmth and a genuine interest in his fellow beings. The person behind the *persona* reinforces the legend. You walk in expecting a larger-than-life person. You walk out after meeting what Y. B. Chavan called a 'jewel' – a legend in his lifetime.

Editorial from The Economic Times dated 18 Dec. 2004

“Hail Arjan Singh”

“Marshal of the Air Force Arjan Singh has donated Rs 2 crore to a trust devoted to the welfare of former Air Force personnel. He did the nation proud while in service and has done it again, with this act. The point is not just his personal magnanimity and commitment to the welfare of ex-service men. His action sets an example for others to follow, on how to dispose of personal wealth. Ideally, the legal and policy infrastructure should encourage everyone to use his/her creativity to the fullest, including for generation of wealth and income. There is no great gain to society, however, in personal fortunes, distinct from ongoing businesses, accumulated by successful wealth creators being passed on to progeny or other heirs. It only serves to give an advantage to certain individuals, an advantage that accrues for individual merit. This sits ill with the notion that merit, articulated by effort, is what deserves to be rewarded. Therefore, many societies, not excluding the normally business-friendly US, tax away largish portions of inherited estates. Such taxation, however, could well prove a disincentive for wealth creation. The ideal solution, therefore, is to create a culture in which wealth creators successfully and intelligently give away large portions of their personal riches. The US, in particular, has developed such a culture. Its best universities have been endowed by wealth creators; hospitals, libraries, auditoria, football stadia, academic chairs, scholarships, schools, health programmes, etc. have come up from philanthropy. This could become the paradigm for India, too.

Not that setting up trusts for charitable purposes is exactly new to India. Trusts abound, charitable, religious, educational, trustworthy, otherwise. Till the tax laws were tightened in the last Budget, trusts were pretty much the same as tax shelters for Indian businessmen. They were just another set of instruments used to survive an irrational, and penal, tax regime. The tax structure has changed, and become

much more tolerable. But the general attitude to trusts has not. Marshal of the Air Force Arjan Singh's action should serve to open many eyes."

