

# **Sant Singh Tegh (1909-2007): An Obituary**

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An embodiment of sacrifice, patriot, scholar-politician, with encyclopedic knowledge of Kashmiri Sikhs, Sant Singh Tegh, was truly secular. Even Muslims would seek his advice and co-operation, and the Hindus received his help. He was a liberator and saviour for the Sikhs in Jammu & Kashmir.

Born in 13<sup>th</sup> April, 1909 at village Hatian-Dupatta, Muzaffarbad (Now in Pakistan) in the family of S. Nihal Singh and Hashnek Kaur, he passed Matriculation with distinction. He witnessed the Jallianwala massacre in 1919. He got religious education from his father. From early on Sant Singh Tegh was a thinker thoroughly imbued with Panthic sentiment. Since village Hatian-Dupatta was situated near Dumal-Srinagar highway, he learnt driving at an early age. In an interview, he revealed that he drove trucks on Srinagar-Rawalpindi highway for several years due to which he developed a close relationship with the people from every section of society. In 1934, he became President of Gurdwara Patshahi-6, Naloodi. Day by Day, he became more and more popular in Panthic ranks and remained in the forefront of public welfare works. In 1950, he became President of the State Akali Dal and continued in this position till 1957. In 1995, he also worked as General Secretary of the historical Gurdwara at Naloodi. He went to Punjab along with a 'Jatha' of Sikh men and women from the state and courted arrest in the Punjabi Suba agitation. After his release, when he returned to Baramulla, Sikh men and women, sitting in 150 boats and holding Sikh flag, took out an impressive procession in his honour in the river Jhelum from Khoja Bagh to Gurdwara Patshahi-6, Baramula.

Sant Singh Tegh had close relations with eminent Sikh leaders, Master Tara Singh, Giani Kartar Singh, Isher Singh Majhail, Gian Singh Rarewala, etc. As State President of the Akali Dal, he infused a new spirit in Panthic ranks by organising many Akali conferences.

During the 1947 tribal invasion, through his immense influence, he accomplished a remarkable deed by evacuating Hindu-Sikh families from Baramulla, Kupwara, etc. to Srinagar by trucks, buses and tongas. When nearly 60 thousand Sikh-Hindu refugees had collected at Poonchh, Tegh was a member of the delegation that went to Delhi by air and sought to bring the refugees safely to Jammu. At this critical juncture, he enlisted cooperation of top Army officials, such as Lt. Gen. Tara Singh Bal, Maj. Gen. Kulwant Singh, Maj. Atma Singh, and Brig. Pritam Singh.

In the year 1954, he organised big religious congregations at Gurdwara Nanaksar, Mattan, with a view to undoing the Kashmiri Pandits' illegal possession of Gurdwaras (wrested at the behest of Dogra rulers) and for the restoration of the jagir given to the gurdwaras during the Sikh rule, he submitted memoranda to the Government. In these representations, the questions of rehabilitation of the refugees and giving reservation in Govt. jobs to Sikh minority were also raised. In the present difficult times also, he went from village to village encouraging and enthusing the Sikhs and impressing upon them to stay put in Kashmir.

S. Sant Singh Tegh Worked in cooperation with prominent leaders of National Conference, especially Sheikh Abdullah. S. Budh Singh Tiyagi, Mirza Afzal Beg, Bakhshi Ghulam Mohammed, Pandit Sham Lal Saraf, Girdhari Lal Dogra, Khawaja Ghulam Mohammed Sadik and Sardara Singh Mirpuri. He played an important role in getting social, political and economic freedom for the people of the state. In the struggle for political

freedom against the Dogra regime in the State. Sardar Tegh always remained in the forefront as an active leader. For 18 to 20 years, he suffered imprisonment in various jails, including in Muzaffarabad, Kila Hari Parbat, Srinagar and Bhadarwah.

Sheikh Sahib offered to make him Minister of the State, but he did not accept the offer. When Sheikh Abdullah came back after his release from Bhadarwah Jail, Tegh accompanied him. Sardar Tegh visited many countries, including Pakistan, Afghanistan, Turkistan, Iran, etc. He remained in the forefront of the movement to end clericalism in the state, and in this connection, cleric-supporters attacked him also on several occasions.

This skilful and scholarly politician and patriot towards the end led a life of obscurity. It is my firm belief that if Tegh Sahib had joined politics with the intention of gaining some position for himself, he would have gone very far. But this old general, Sher-e-Kashmir, who embraced austerity and dedicated his life to public service, has ended up as a 'Kohinoor' for the people of the state. He passed away on 16 Sept 2007 at age 101 years.

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## **Dr. Chanan Singh (1915-2007) - An Obituary** **The Doctor who served as Head of Mission Hospital, Bareilly (UP)**

*S.D. Panesar\**

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Dr. Chanan Singh - who passed away last October, aged 92, was born in a Gursikh family in 1915 at Amritsar. After securing a First in FSc from Khalsa college, Amritsar, he studied medicine at King Edward Medical College, Lahore, for MBBS degree in 1939. In a batch of 60 there were five Sikhs. After a brief stint in Lady Irwin Hospital, Delhi, he joined the Bareilly Cantonment Hospital in 1941. His reputation for diagnosis by feeling the pulse of the patient spread fast. The Mission Hospital Chief, Dr. Peril, An Englishman, invited Dr. Singh to join the Hospital in 1945. He became the first non-Christian to head a Deptt. in a Mission Hospital.

Then, in 1952, Dr. Singh established his own clinic with X-ray and other testing facilities, providing free treatment to poor patients. A devoted Gursikh, Dr. Chanan Singh never missed *Nit-Nem Path* and studied Guru Granth Sahib at the start of every day, besides being steeped in Sikh history. He remained active member of the Gurdwara committee and social organizations.

The *Antim Ardas* for the departed soul was hugely attended at Bareilly Gurdwara on Oct. 14, 2007 by the medical fraternity and eminent citizens. Dr. Chanan Singh leaves behind a devoted family of three sons.

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