

# Visiting Kolkata - An inspiring & Nostalgic Experience

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It was quite an inspiring and memorable event for me to revive my old memories by meeting friends and former students during my recent visit to Calcutta (Kolkata) in December 2006, where I had spent more than three decades. I felt greatly elated when Mr. Bhupinder Singh Sarna, President of Bangladesh Gurdwara Management Board and Chief Editor of Daily *Desh Darpan* heartily welcomed and honored me as the ex- Editor of *Desh Darpan* on behalf of the newspaper staff and its readers. He presented me copies of “*Neriôn Takkia Itihas*” written by Dr. Tarlochan Singh, Chairman of the Minority Commission of India, and a plaque of Golden Temple Amritsar.

*The Desh Darpan*, the oldest and at one time, the most widely circulated nationalist Punjabi daily in Eastern India was established in 1930 to unite and raise the revolutionary voice of the Punjabi community against the British rule. Niranjan Singh Talib, a close associate of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose was instrumental in running this paper. *Desh Darpan* also brought out Punjabi weekly, *Khalsa Gazette* for many years. Niranjan Singh Talib moved to Punjab and became the President of Punjab Pradesh Congress. A prominent poet, writer and scholar of Calcutta, S.Raghubir Singh Bir, of “*Atam Science*” fame, took over the charge of *Desh Darpan* [published from 82A Ashutosh Mukherji Road]. I could recall the room where S.Raghubir Singh used to sit in *Desh Darpan*, and we often sought advice from him as the chief patron of Punjabi Sahit Sabha, Calcutta.

Another Punjabi daily newspaper, *Navi Parbhat* was also started in 1952 from 264M, Bow Bazar Street, Calcutta. It was nice to meet its editor, Hardev Singh Grewal who was my colleague in running Punjabi Sahit Sabha for years. **Quite interestingly, both the daily papers have survived all onslaughts of harsh times and are the only papers being published regularly outside of Punjab for so long even though with miniscule circulation.** *Navi Parbhat* also published weekly *Shan-e-Punjab* for several years. I had the good fortune of working in all these papers as photographer, reporter or editor, besides my sports and educational engagements in Calcutta. The *Navi Parbhat* under its new management of Sikh entrepreneurs, Sardar Sohan Singh Atiana is posed for a face-lift and a comeback. As I passed M.A, B.Ed., LL.B., from Calcutta University and was the Captain of Bengal Hockey League 1st division teams; *Khalsa Sporting Club* and *Punjab Sports Club* (wherein played the legendary film actor, Prithvi Raj Kapoor), there was no dearth of social engagements for me to revive my old memories. My former student and relative S. Kirpal Singh Sangha Chhajawal was always available to arrange for my conveyance through the astonishingly overcrowded city teeming with at least 12 million people walking and driving as they like flouting traffic rules. It was nice that my former student, Dr Sukhwant Singh Kainth, General Secretary, Punjabi Sahit Sabha arranged for a get together with me in *Khalsa Higher Secondary School* at 73 Paddapukur Road, calling upon my students and friends to come in time. Surprisingly enough there are other two Schools sharing the same property: the Govt.- aided dilapidated, barely managing to survive *Khalsa Girls High School* (Hindi medium) catering mostly to the underprivileged and the much coveted *Khalsa English High School* enjoying a sprawling campus.

Meeting S. Saran Singh Ji (IAS retired) the editor of *The Sikh Review* along with S. Inderpal Singh Paul, (ex Editor daily *Navi Parbhat*) was really a valuable opportunity. I badly felt the demise of my well-wisher Captain Bhag Singh Ji, the founder-editor of *The Sikh Review* many years ago. Very often I had the opportunity to find the great duo of Captain Bhag

Singh and the hefty retired Calcutta University Professor Dr. Hira Lal Chopra carrying a Khoonti (Bamboo stick bent from one side) in his hand working together for the Sikh Review. The Sikh Review a theological, educational and socio-cultural Monthly was founded by Captain Bhag Singh and his team of dedicated Sikh intellectuals in 1953. Since then it has maintained its high standard and it is the only magazine of the Sikhs that has been used as a source material all over the world. The Sikh Review's office is at 116 Karnani Mansion, 25A Park Street, Calcutta 70016, which is a great metropolis, and its memories are even greater.

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