

# Dr. Surjit Kaur - an Obituary

AMRIT KAUR\*

---

\* Secretary, Guru Gobind Singh Foundation. Washington. D.C. (USA) Email: amrit\_kaur9@hotmail.com

---

DR. SURJIT KAUR, a versatile scholar, and past Secretary and President of Guru Gobind Singh Foundation (in late 80's and early 90's) left for her heavenly abode on March 18<sup>th</sup> 2009 - after battling with cancer for over a year, in Virginia, at her daughter, Ranju Kohli's home. Her funeral took place on March 19<sup>th</sup> 2009. Family and friends from far and wide gathered at Guru Gobind Singh Foundation on Sunday, March 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2009 to offer Antim Ardas and pay tributes to a woman who made a difference in so many lives with her spirit of service deeply grounded in Sikh faith.

At antim ardas, her grand daughter Tarranum paid glowing tributes to her: "My grandmother's life wasn't a simple story of overcoming fear and struggle. It was so much more than that. As her granddaughter, closest to her, I am baffled by the strength it took for her to leave a bad marriage, convince her father to let her not only leave home but come to America and get the kind of education very few women even dreamt of at that time, and then live independently while raising an exceptional daughter."

"My grandmother lived her life on her terms, by her principles, by her truths, choosing to be authentic to her own self. During that journey there weren't any grandiose luxuries or sympathetic lifelong friends, or much companionship either. There was hurt, hardship, confusion, and disappointment. But not once did she cower to the fates or succumb to a lesser life, the kind of lives that most of us are happily - and perhaps ignorantly - living today. She didn't just demand more for herself, she created more. She changed her destiny. She lived a big life - larger than life that fate had designed for her".

She was the author of four books, including "*Reaching for Stars*" biographical account of successful Sikhs outside of India. Introduction to the book was written by none other than the legendry author Khushwant Singh. She worked in Multi Cultural Center, of Fairfax County, for over a decade, and worked tirelessly to improve the lot of battered woman, poor children and helped solved their family problems. She never missed any opportunity at her work at the county when she could have integrated her beliefs and her work. She celebrated Guru Nanak Dev ji's Gurburab at the Center, and another time she persuaded County officials to screen videos on early Sikh immigrant settlers in California and their contribution to USA. As a single mother, she struggled all her life but did not let the hardships beat her down. She acquired her Ph.D. from Washington State University in Pullman, Washington. She was well versed in Gurbani and this love for Sikhi she had received as a legacy from her father, Late S. Jodh Singh, a well respected and well known Radio personality of Jullandhar Radio, India. She was deeply influenced by him in her thinking.

People from all Gurdwaras of Washington Metro area, and many organizations she closely worked with, came to pay their homage to her. Mr. Paul Kandhari, President of Hemkund Foundation from New York and Dr. Balwant Singh came to pay their tributes to her for her continuous work and support to the Foundation. Dr. Kamaljit k. Sethi with whom she had worked in 1990's at her Sikh TV show spoke on her contribution to society, Dr. Rajwant Singh, with whom she was associated for a long time in GGSF, spoke

affectionately about her charming personality, her sharp intellect and deep devotion to her faith.

Every year, Guru Gobind Singh Foundation confers Sewa Awards to those who have rendered some outstanding service to the Sikh community at large. Before her death the Foundation had decided that the 2009 Sewa Award would be given to Surjit Kaur, but sadly, it was given - posthumously - to her daughter, Ranju Kohli on Vaiaskhi.



### **Mrs. Davinder Kaur Padam (Kenya) - A Tribute**

Sardarni Davinder Kaur Ji, wife of *The Sikh Review's* long time representative in Kenya (East Africa) passed away on 19 Feb. 2009 after a short illness. Sardar Mohan Singh Padam, who has distinguished himself in public service as the Past District Governor of Lion's International (1984) and Bibi Davinder Kaur had celebrated the Golden Jubilee of their togetherness several years ago. She was a popular, social activist and devoted home maker.

We convey our heartfelt condolences and prayers for the peace of the departed soul.

- Editor & Publisher, *The Sikh Review*