



DEFENDING SACHKAND

June 1984



In June 1984 the Indian army attacked Sachkand Sri Harmandir Sahib, Amritsar under fabricated claims of flushing out Sikhs.

Thousands of innocent people were murdered by the army and no arrest warrants were mentioned in the 'Indian government white paper the Punjab agitation' (July 1984) for anyone in the complex at the time of the attack.

The Sikhs who defended the complex fell to the bullets of the Indian army – a few survived.

The account that follows is based upon factual information and events.

A lead fictional character, Balraam Singh, has been created to lead the narrative.

Chapter 1

My name is Balraam Singh, this is my story of what happened to me in 1984. 'Bal' means strength and 'Raam' means God who is all pervasive, so the name Balraam translates to 'Strength of the all-pervasive God' and Singh translates to 'tiger.'

In April 1984, my 'Chacha Jee', my father's younger brother was killed as part of a conspiracy to assassinate Sant Jarnail Singh Jee Bhindranwale.

Sant Bhindranwale was a saint/Sant who was leading a civil rights movement asking for equitable treatment of all Punjabi people. He campaigned for economic reforms and led a religious reform movement, in which thousands of people gave up intoxicants and became more religious. He was an uncompromising figure who was loved for his unflinching stand for the people of Punjab.



Bhai Balraam Singh



Bhai Surinder Singh Sodhi

My chacha's name was Bhai Surinder Singh Sodhi – he was the right-hand arm of Sant Bhindranwale. He carried out and co-ordinated a lot of projects on behalf of Sant Bhindranwale. This mostly consisted of delivering justice of many kinds and secret missions.

The Punjabi people had no faith in the Punjab police in getting them justice in cases of abuse, so Sant Bhindranwale became a haven for the downtrodden.

People would come with their cases to get justice via the men of Sant Bhindranwale – so families who were being forced to give dowries or had their daughters kidnapped came to Sant Bhindranwale.

Sant Bhindranwale would get their daughters rescued and/or stop the demands of dowries for families and get the families to live in harmony.

He had massive influence and the government were raising a fake spectre of him being a terrorist without a single shred of evidence.

Punjab Police were corrupt and would take bribes and be party to cases of abuses of power. In this way Sant Bhindranwale was winning the hearts and minds of all those they met, even though much hyperbole was created in a media frenzy to malign his character. Chacha Jee was the epitome of a Sikh hero, he led many of these covert missions and co-ordinated them.

I was lucky to have been in the company of Chacha Jee. My fondest memory is of serving him when he conducted a 40-day meditation.

We had a small basement under our farmhouse. Chacha Jee used this as his favourite spot to meditate in. I was the only person allowed into the basement for the duration of the 40 days. I was basically his personal assistant, for the whole meditation, I cooked and cleaned for him. I washed his clothes and kept an eye on him – to see if he was healthy and maintaining vitality.

He would enter trances of meditation and would be completely lost in it, for up to 20 hours at a time. His face would glow with radiance whilst he sat cross legged with his back completely upright.



Sant Jarnail Singh Jee Bhindranwale

When in these trances he would have no need for sleep, food, water or going to the bathroom, as he would be in perfect contemplation and experiencing spiritual nirvana.

In this way he would regularly miss his routine of daily bathing time, meals and daily prayers, as he would just be transposed in meditation without any knowledge of time.

This is what it must feel like to experience timelessness. If somebody else were to see him in this state, they would probably take him for dead, as sometimes breathing would also cease – although vitality could be seen in his body.

When he would come out of this meditation he would have no comprehension of how much time had elapsed like this.

Chapter 2

For the duration of the 40 days I never witnessed Chacha Jee sleeping, falling asleep, or slouching or trying to take a rest. He was always beaming with energy regardless of the time of day. He amazingly stayed awake for the whole 40 days.

He lost weight but I tried my best to force feed him with lashings of butter and milk with each meal, he usually only ate once a day during this meditation, sometimes not at all.

After eating to ensure he wouldn't fall asleep and to digest the food he would stand and meditate or read scripture whilst standing. He hid his spiritual prowess very well and people didn't know this side of him.

He purposely decided to never lose himself in meditation whilst sitting in the congregation and would only engage in meditation in public at a limited capacity.



Bhai Surinder Singh Sodhi



Bhai Major Singh Nagoke

He did this as he knew there was a great risk of him losing himself in the meditation and he could end up sitting like that for hours and people would begin to talk of his spirituality.

He preferred the quiet life and this is where he excelled, in not being seen or heard and quietly accomplishing all that he desired.

Chacha Jee was killed on 14th April 1984 in Amritsar by two assassins who lured him into a trap and shot him. I was enraged and wanted to avenge his murder.

At this critical time Sant Bhindranwale appeared to me in a dream and told me not to come to Amritsar, but to await his orders to go there.

I was bound by these orders so had to patiently wait for my time to go and see Sant Bhindranwale.



General Labh Singh

Chacha Jee's death shook me, as it was part of a conspiracy by the Akali's the Sikh political party to aid and abet the murder of those close to Sant Bhindranwale and murder Sant Jee too. Being killed by your own was the worst sort of treachery.

Sant Bhindranwale had grown in fame by delivering speeches in the complex of Sri Darbar Sahib Amritsar which is the epicentre of the Sikhs.

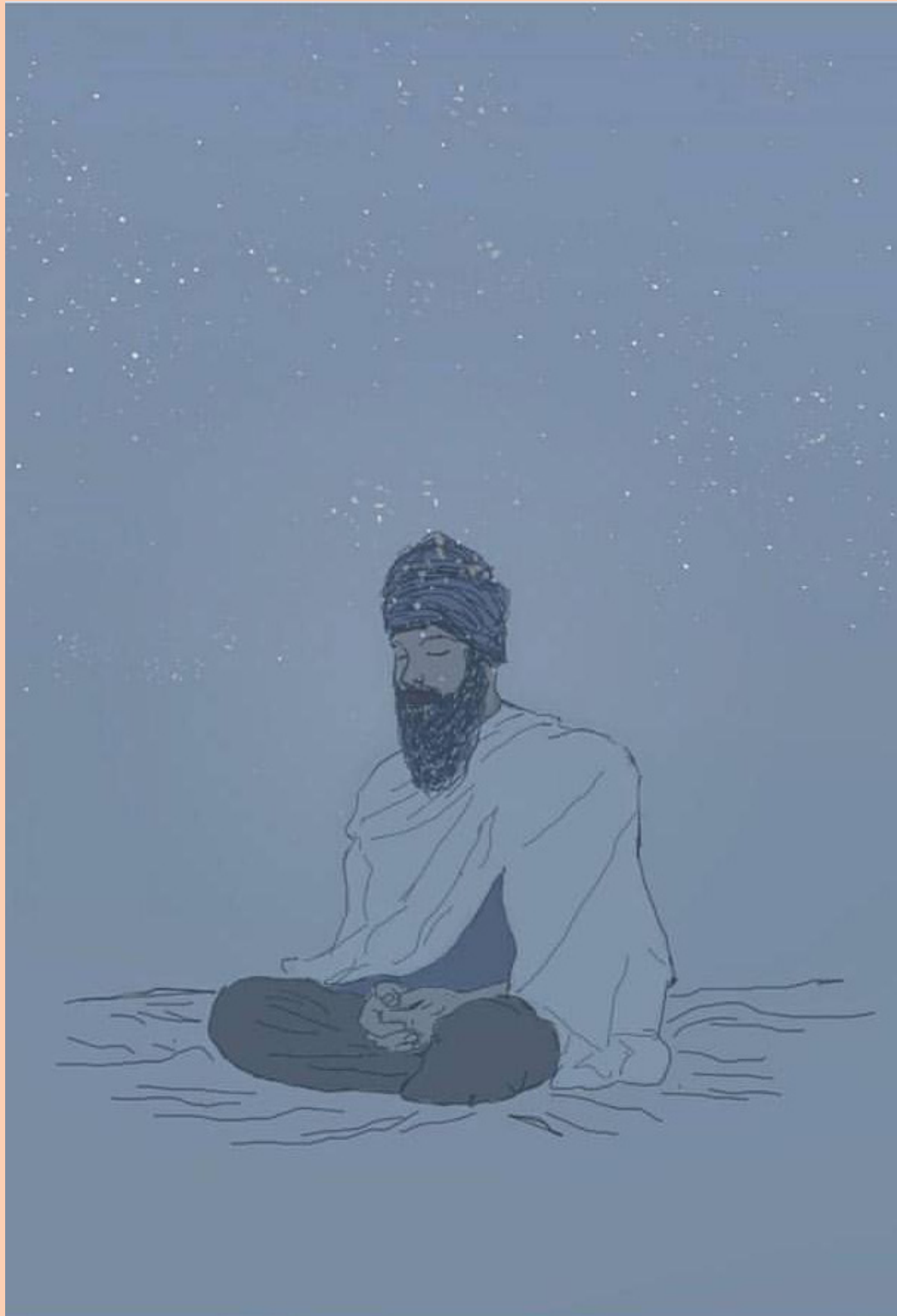
These speeches were delivered mostly in 1983 but then the Akalis banned Sant Bhindranwale from the stage at Manji Sahib where public conferences were held.

Thus no public speeches were given to the Sikh masses from the complex by Sant Bhindranwale in 1984 and there had been growing tensions, although Sant Bhindranwale were showing great restraint even when threatened by men of the Akalis.

Sant Bhindranwale were still holding firmly to a strategy of keeping unity between Sikh organisations so no splinters would break their power base.

The female assassin had also tried to shoot Sant Bhindranwale but she couldn't pluck up the courage to shoot and was spotted and apprehended.

General Labh Singh and Bhai Major Singh Nagoke killed the assassins of Chacha Jee within 24 hours.



Chapter 3

When Chacha Jee was martyred I was grieving, my role model and hero who had left for his heavenly abode. All that was left were memories of his prowess and inspiration to spur me on to be a speck of what he had become.

I decided to also conduct a 40-day meditation there's no better motivation than the death of a loved one to launch yourself into meditation. I basked in the glory of solitude, stillness and peace of the meditation.

The loss of Chacha Jee allowed me to focus on being detached from the world and attaching myself whole-heartedly into the meditation.

These 40 days took me up to the nearly the end of May 1984.

I had conducted the 40-day meditation with the sole purpose of getting union with God. I had no other wish or desire.

Chacha Jee used to say he would meditate for the well-being of others and causes for the betterment of all. He would never pray for himself, he was that selfless, but would do so for anyone else.

He said he would rather accept God's will for anything he had to endure, rather than pray for a solution.

At the end of my 40-day meditation, Sant Bhindranwale came to me again in a dream and told me to now travel to Amritsar to be with them.

I now gathered Chacha Jee's few guns and ammunition from the basement.

Due to the meditation I had undergone, I now realised what 'Maha Parshad' was, it was a term used by Chacha Jee and a few of his friends.



When meditating it just came to me, as my mind was flowering to a wider awareness and wisdom.

'Maha Parshad' was Chacha Jee's collection of arms that he had specifically stored for the Indian army's attack on Sri Darbar Sahib Amritsar (the Sikhs holiest Gurdwara). He had meditated over these arms and infused powers into them.

When you would use these guns and ammo they would do things that scientifically speaking, they should not be able to do, for example, firing one bullet would be equivalent to a whole round.

Not only that, the bullet would pierce many bodies of your foes – so taking out 25 people instead of one. The bullets would follow their own trajectories, piercing bodies at will, then stopping. This collection of 'Maha Parshad' was small but very effective in dire situations.



Chapter 4

Chache Jee had told me in no uncertain terms, that we walk straight into our fate. He said true Singh's embrace this fate with open arms – even if they know what is about to happen next.

As they fully understand the command of God and have effaced their egos as is taught to us in Japji Sahib in the 2nd verse **“Guru Nanak says those that have understood the command of God, are never accused of having any ego (for they have effaced it).”**

I packed up the arms and one set of clothes. I bid my parents farewell and told them I must go, as Sant Jee had called me to Amritsar.

I am fondly referred to as ‘Shota Sodhi’ which means ‘small Sodhi’ as I also look exactly like Chacha Jee did. He taught me from the age of 14 years old, to wear shades in public and conceal my facial features as best I could, this was because we were carbon copies of one another.

He did not want me to be mistaken for him and anything untoward to happen to me as a result.

The Punjabi people had no faith in the Punjab police in getting them justice in cases of abuse, so Sant Bhindranwale became a haven for the downtrodden.

People would come with their cases to get justice via the men of Sant Bhindranwale – so families who were being forced to give dowries or had their daughters kidnapped came to Sant Bhindranwale.

I am now 17 years old.

I took the household ox and cart, telling my parents I needed it for seva (voluntary service) and that it would not be returned.

In actual fact it was being used as a decoy to conceal the weapons I was transporting. I hid the weapons under crops I loaded on to the cart.

I had to change the cart 3 times along the way, buying other people's carts at higher rates as my poor cattle couldn't walk the whole way in the time I needed to complete the trip in.

Finally, I arrived at Amritsar and entered one of the hotels at the back of Sri Akaal Takhat Sahib, ‘Sri’ means supreme, ‘Akaal Takhat Sahib’ means Immortal throne of the master, this is the highest temporal point of power for Sikhs, this Gurdwara represents the Sikh political power as a sovereign nation as would a parliamentary building for another nation.

I gave the code word to the hotel manager and he led me to the secret tunnel that existed between the hotel and Sri Akaal Takhat Sahib. Upon entering the tunnel I saw a bomb fitted near the entrance.

It was now 31st May 1984 – I knew this bomb would be triggered at the right time, to conceal the tunnel and give the hotel manager ample time to escape to safety.

The bomb was a sure indicator to me that the army would soon attack the Harmander Sahib complex.

I emerged from the tunnel to be greeted by Bhai Kabul Singh – he had jointly assassinated the fake Nirankari cult leader Gurbachan with Bhai Ranjit Singh. Bhai Kabul Singh had been living life on the run for the last 3 years as he was wanted for the assassination of Gurbachan, but he would still complete covert missions.

Bhai Kabul Singh tightly hugged me & helped me out of the tunnel, he said ‘Dhan Sodhi’ meaning ‘Sodhi is great’. This was our way of mourning the death of my Chacha Jee. All the Singhs saw my ‘Chacha Jee’ in me.

I said to Bhai Kabul Singh, “Here's some ‘Maha Parshad’ showing him the collection of arms that I had brought along. He chuckled and put his muscular arm around my shoulder and walked me to Sant Bhindranwale.



Sant Bhindranwale was deep in conversation with General Subegh Singh Jee when I entered the room but they both arose swiftly upon my entry.

I tried to touch Sant Bhindranwale's feet and he grabbed my hands on my descent and also said 'Dhan Sodhi.' Bhai Kabul Singh quickly quipped and said 'Maha Parshad' pointing at the arms bag on my shoulder.

Sant Bhindranwale said 'Sodhi will still participate in the attack through his arms even if he is Shaheed (martyred).'

General Subegh Singh Jee also tightly hugged me – it was the first time he had met me. I knew of him but he did not know of me, this was our formal introduction.



Bhai Kabul Singh



General Subegh Singh

Chapter 5

I was treated to the best food they could muster and then I remembered that I had barfi too – which is a milk based sweet.

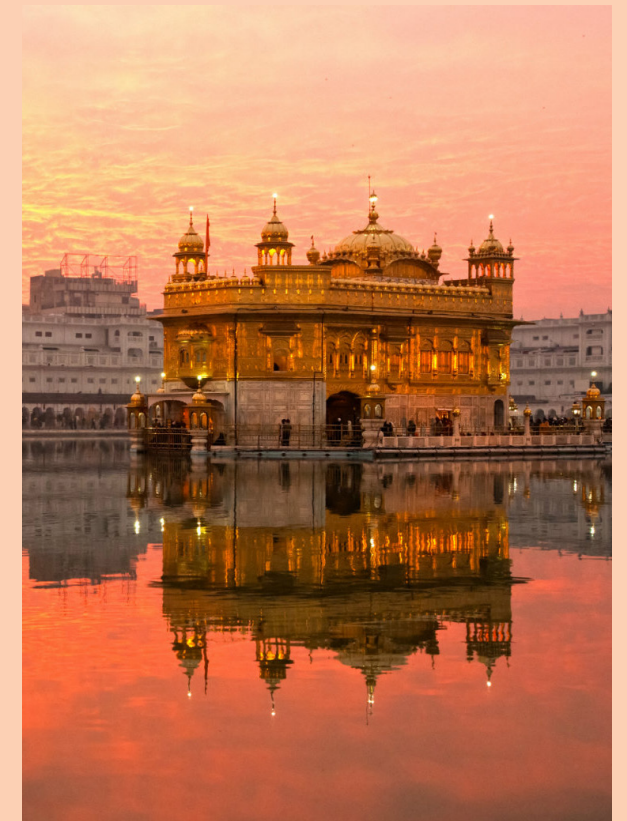
Baba Thakhur Singh Jee had randomly come up to me at Beas, which is a city I passed through on route to Amritsar, he had approached me from within a crowd and handed me the box of barfi and said 'give it to the Singhs' and then disappeared back into the crowd. I didn't even have time to react, they were there one minute and gone the next.

I pulled this gift from Baba Jee from my bag after eating my meal and handed it to Sant Bhindranwale telling him who it was from. Sant Bhindranwale lifted the box to his head in reverence and said the Singhs will eat it, when it is time to celebrate.

After my meal I made my way to pay my respects at Darbar Sahib. As I stepped on the scorching hot marble steps my mind drifted back towards my 40 day meditation thinking about my desire to unite with God whilst tip toeing through the blazing hot marble slabs.



Baba Thakhur Singh Jee



There were very few people queuing up due to the heat and time of day. As I approached Darbar Sahib the meditative voice that I had nurtured, started to reverberate through each pore of my existence, I could hear the word, "Vaheguru".

I bowed at the entrance step of Darbar Sahib – my whole body became light as a feather and was exhilarated with spiritual energy.

My forehead was magnetically stuck to the entrance step and I don't know how long I was there for, but I came back around to an usher nudging me to reality.

As I arose the internal meditative sound of "Vaheguru" would not abate and it was like I was walking on clouds.

When I entered Darbar Sahib, I fell prostrate at the gate where you bow. I cried tears of joy and gratitude, wiping them away with my neck scarf (parna), pretending I had something in my eyes. I arose and sat down upstairs to bask in the glory of the spiritual aura of Sri Guru Ram Das Jee.



Sant Harchand Singh Longowal pictured clapping his hands to Rajiv Gandhi, this was a few years after 1984, when Longowal signed an accord with the Indian government.

Some hours passed like this and I returned to Sri Akaal Takhat Sahib to do my Rehras Sahib (evening prayer).

As I left Harmander Sahib, Sant Harchand Singh Longowal was walking in, on the pathway – he took a double take when he saw me and went white as a ghost in fear. I smiled and purposely cheekily joined my hands as to bow a greeting to him and winked my eye at him.

His security protocol quickly huddled him along, not realising what was transpiring. He had been petrified at the sight of me, as I looked exactly like Chacha Jee and as far as Longowal was concerned, Chacha Jee was killed back in April. Longowal knew he was suspected of having a hand in the killing of Chacha Jee too.

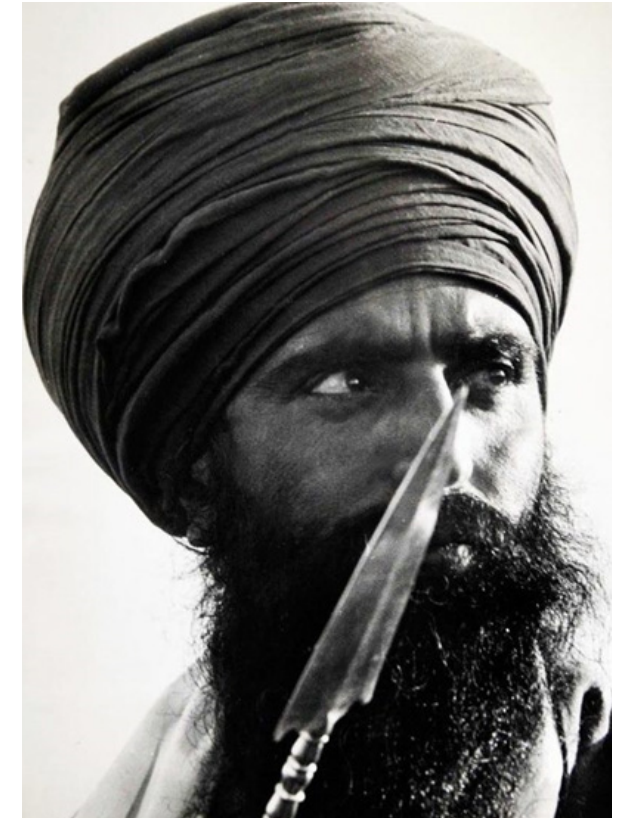
Chapter 6

On my exit from the walkway of Darbar Sahib I had Parshad – a blessed food, it was warm, sweet & buttery. I then made my way back to Sri Akaal Takhat Sahib where Sant Bhindranwale were based.

After completing my Rehras Sahib (evening prayer) I went to see Sant Bhindranwale, he told me to immediately go and do ishnaan at the sarovars of Kaulsar and Amritsar (to bathe in the water tanks of these two Gurdwaras in the complex).

I immediately picked up my bathing kit and proceeded to Kaulsar which is in front of Baba Atal Gurdwara.

I decided to not conceal my identity as it was already dark. I took a dip at Kaulsar and briskly made my way back to Amritsar (tank of immortal nectar) and entered the sarovar (water tank) near 'Thara Sahib' where the spot for 'Att-Sath teerath' is.



When I was undressing I saw Bhai Dalbeer Singh Abhyassee standing in the sarovar lost in meditation.

This Singh had a habit of getting lost in meditation whilst standing in the sarovar, to the extent that he would stand for that long in the sarovar that fish in the sarovar would start biting away at his body and he would be oblivious to the fish biting him.

He was saintly and meditative. It was inspirational seeing him in his element, basking in meditation. I glimpsed at him in awe whilst doing my ishnaan.

The night was sombre and eerie. I saw extra personnel from the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) – which is armed police and the Border Security Force (BSF) which are soldiers from the border.

I saw the CRPF & BSF around the exterior of the complex and throughout Amritsar when I had made my way in earlier. I knew the time of our battle against the Indian army was before us.

When I arrived at Sri Akaal Takhat Sahib, Bhai Kabul Singh told me that Sant Bhindranwale had convened a meeting on an upper floor of Sri Akaal Takhat Sahib at 9pm. The time for the meeting soon arrived and I walked up the stairs, I was sweating profusely as the summer heat was suffocating.

As I approached the entrance door, Bhai Rashpal Singh the PA of Sant Bhindranwale was managing entry to the meeting with a number of other bodyguards of Sant Jee.

He smiled at me as I approached the doorway, he said Fateh to me (the Sikh greeting) and patted me through the door. I knew what entry to this meeting meant and I felt jubilant – it was acceptance to fight alongside Sant Jee in the coming days.

In the meeting room I could see all the top silent assassins of Sant Bhindranwale – these Singhs were mostly unknown for what they had done for the Sikh nation.

That is how they excelled at what they did – they never got caught and never spoke about what they did. Also gathered were the main known figures such as Bhai Amrik Singh Jee the President of the All India Sikh Students Federation, Bhai Harminder Singh Sandhu the General Secretary of the Federation and the Federation’s Women’s Wing President Bibi Upkar Kaur Jee.



General Subegh Singh



Bibi Upkar Kaur

Chapter 7

Sant Jee stood up and said, “We are gathered here today as the time is upon us. An attack on Sri Darbar Sahib is imminent, at any moment.

The CRPF & BSF have been drafted in, in greater numbers and they have surrounded the complex. The army is moving throughout Punjab too in large numbers – some estimates say 70,000 troops have been mobilised.

We will fight back when they desecrate the sanctity of Sri Darbar Sahib, but we will only retaliate when absolutely necessary.

We have no interest in causing wanton destruction or injury to the sangat (congregation) gathered here. Our job will be to now prepare for the inevitable and save as much as the sangat that will be present in the complex when it is attacked. I will now handover to General Sahib who will give you further instructions.”

General Subegh Singh now stood up – he was an ex-Indian army officer who had helped free Bangladesh to win independence. He had been unceremoniously discharged from the Indian army and was thus now going to lead our operational plan against the incoming Indian forces.

General Sahib, spoke softly but commandingly he said, “Around the complex we have strategically placed sand at different points and disguised it to make it look like it is there for building repairs.

This sand is to now be used. I need all this sand collated and put into these bags (he showed the bags to everyone) and then stitched up.

These sandbags will act as a major deterrent to protect the sangat and us. They must be filled and placed strategically across the complex, by dawn. I need a group of youth to work on this all night.

Bibi Upkar Kaur said, “I can get some of the ladies with me to stitch the bags – although most of you Singhs can stitch too, as it is part of the discipline of a Taksali Singh to learn how to sew. But just to ensure it is done efficiently – I can send different ladies with Singhs across the complex.’

Bhai Dalbir Singh Abyasee said, “I will gather four Singhs to do this with me.”



Chapter 8

General Sahib said, “Okay, now that is decided. I will also dispatch General Bains to each of the sandbag points as he knows where they are to be concealed. The sandbags will only be drawn out of their concealed positions when absolutely necessary.

We still need the complex to look normal, without any fortifications or defence mechanisms, hence why this needs to be completed at night and covertly.”

General Subegh Singh pulled out a map of the complex and explained the strategic positions to be taken up by all the Singhs present to defend the complex.

We were told to take shifts on being at those positions from 6am tomorrow. Some arms were distributed to all those present at the meeting.

Sant Jee said, “Let me be absolutely clear. No one is to fire any bullets of retaliation, until you get orders from General Sahib or myself.

The armed forces are going to try and draw out our positions by firing into the complex but we will show the utmost restraint. Also, history will look back upon us and judge how we reacted. We will only fire back when the Sri Akaal Takht Jathedar gives us orders to do so.” (Jathedar means leader).

Sant Jee and the Singhs knew it would take a lot for the Akaal Takhat Jathedar to give this order, as in effect, it might signal the end of his political career. No one dared speak up or question Sant Jee, although many of us were perplexed by this statement of awaiting an edict from the Akaal Takhat Jathedar.

Sant Jee continued and said, “A communications system will be in place and commandeered from here. You will be able to talk to us through these walkie-talkies.’ Sant Jee then revealed a box with about 20 devices in it.



General Subegh Singh said, ‘I will give these walkie talkies out at 8am after visiting each of your outposts and assessing your positions.

General Bains will have another 3 ex-army generals who will be posted across the complex to assist you all in the fortifications and defence. We will introduce you to these 3 generals tomorrow.’

Sant Jee: ‘Now, all go and do Ardaas to Miri Piri da Malik – Sri Guru HarGobind Sahib Jee, so that we’re able to live upto His high ideals of fighting to protect the sanctity of this pristine and perfect abode of Sachkhand.’

The Singh’s bellowed Jaikaare (war cries) and the meeting ended. Everyone proceeded to their tasks and positions. Most took up abode at their outposts immediately, sleeping at them, rather than be caught out by any adverse turn of events.

Chapter 9

1st June 1984

The next morning at 8am a curfew was imposed by the government at Sri Darbar Sahib. Nobody was allowed to enter or leave the complex. Between about 1pm to 8pm, the CRPF and BSF opened indiscriminate fire into the complex.

I was stationed at Sri Akaal Takaht Sahib; Sant Jee had told me this would be my station. I was positioned on an upper floor. The Singh's knew I had been involved in Seva with Chacha Jee but because I was younger than most of them, they were shielding me.

The other reason could have been the fact that I was one of the few Singhs that could use the 'Maha Prashad' weapons – it was only with sufficient spiritual prowess, one could use them effectively and wisely. My chacha had taught me how to do this.



For most of the day, I used binoculars to pinpoint where the firing was coming from. I also had to then mark these positions on a map.

Due to the in-depth training Chacha Jee had given me, I could also ascertain what types of firearms were being used.

If I was in doubt, I had General Bains stationed alongside me and I would ask him for clarification. We were also assessing where troops would enter from and how to defend against them at all entry points. The tactics of war were being planned.

General Subegh Singh had set up a command centre in the basement of Sri Akaal Takht Sahib. Our arms were mostly stashed in the well behind Sri Akaal Takht Sahib. We had a tunnel from under Takht Sahib accessing the well. Live explosives were hidden in the well compound, just in case the explosives were sparked the well's depth would limit the outfall.

Bhai Mehnga Singh who was martyred along with 6 others on 1st June 1984



There was a collection of grenades and dynamite sticks stored here.

We had very few fully automatic weapons or machine guns. Our plan was to simply take the Indian Army's weapons when they enter and use them against them.

There was widespread anxiety in the complex amongst the sangat who were now trapped inside. No pre-warning of the curfew or firing had been given. Due to the sweltering heat, people had no choice but to venture out of rooms as they had to keep hydrated or use the bathroom. It was the worst type of weather for an attack to be launched.

People could die just from the heat, let alone the stress of the situation or bullets of the CRPF and BSF.

Seven Singh's became Shaheed from this indiscriminate firing into the complex and many others were injured.

As evening fell, the curfew was lifted. The cremations of the seven Singhs who had become Shaheed were held and the injured could finally get further treatment outside of the complex. This bought an end to the events of the 1st June 1984.



Indira Gandhi shaking the hands of an SAS soldier, Mary Anne Weaver had reported British involvement & months of planning the army assault in the Guardian newspaper in 1984 after the attack occurred.

Chapter 10 2nd June 1984

The army surrounded the complex and 70,000 troops were deployed across Punjab. 15,000 were dispatched just for Amritsar. There was no gunfire from inside or outside the complex throughout the day.

The day was spent greasing our firearms and stocking up on any food and supplies we could get hold of. We also spent the day watching and spying on all entrants to the complex. It was a tough job, being incognito and not revealing our stations. We were putting on a front of no preparation for battle.

The sangat had realised the dire situation they were in, so many who had come for Sri Guru Arjan Dev Jee's Shaheedi Dihara (martyrdom anniversary) on 3rd June 1984, now tried to leave the complex.

Many had arrived early on the 2nd June, but by midday, many frantically tried to escape. Trains were cancelled from midday from Amritsar train station, so many people had no choice but to return to Sri Darbar Sahib.

On 2nd June 1984 about 10,000 Sikhs in total had arrived in preparation for the Shaheedi Divas.

By the evening, everyone leaving the complex was arrested and interrogated by the army. When news of this spread, people stopped trying to leave the complex.

A lot of underground tunnels and secret passages and entrances existed in the complex. These were developed at various times in history as the complex was expanded and renovated. We were fully aware of the network of these tunnels, thus were able to pass messages around by word of mouth, if the walkie-talkies did not work.

We listened to Indira Gandhi give a hypocritical speech on the 2nd June 1984, which was broadcasted on National TV and radio.

We listened on radio and heard her spreading lies about trying to create peace in Punjab, when she had already ordered firing into the complex.

Millions of Sikhs were now alerted to the dire situation, as her speech alluded to a real, national crisis. Sikhs across the country and globe now awaited more bad news.

On the 2nd June, the Akaal Takht Jathedar Giani Kirpal Singh issued an edict to the Sikh Nation which said,

Keeping in view the unprovoked attack on Sri Darbar Sahib, we appeal to all the organisations of the Khalsa Panth to defeat the sinister designs or the demonic forces and repulse the attacks of the CRPF and BSF to uphold the sanctity of Sri Darbar Sahib.'

Both Giani Kirpal Singh and the head Granthi of Sri Darbar Sahib – Bhai Sahib Singh, duly signed the edict.

Unfortunately, the edict did not proliferate through to the Sikh masses, as a media and communications ban was imposed by the government.

Thus, Sikhs across Punjab mostly never learnt of the edict and so could never respond to it in time. But, we the Singhs in Sri Darbar Sahib now had the green light to fight back against the unprovoked assault and engage in battle.

Chapter 11

On the 3rd of June 1984, all foreigners were banned from Punjab and shipped out. Press censorship was imposed by law even though all communications from Sri Darbar Sahib had already been severed.

We spent the whole day of the Shaheedi Divas reflecting on Sri Guru Arjan Dev Jee, who sat being tortured in the scorching heat accepting God's will peacefully undergoing tortures of being seated on a hot plate, with hot sand being poured over them.

This kept us calm and sombre, but we were all on guard all day, ready to fight back if orders were given, but the whole day passed in watching the army build fortifications and surround the complex.

The CRPF, BSF and police were all dismissed from the surrounds of the complex and we were now completely at the mercy of the army.



This was perfect in terms of a defence perspective, but the worst possible scenario for the Sangat who were trapped inside.

The army personnel who were to attack the complex were drafted in from outside of Punjab to ensure complete loyalty in following orders.

This also meant they had no real idea of the structure and passages of the complex, whereas the local police, CRPF and BSF did, as they were all local to Amritsar.

It was the worst-case scenario for the sangat, as we knew a blood bath would occur in which the army would become desperate and kill all at will.

Throughout the 3rd June 1984 the women of AISSF under Bibi Upkar Kaurs command, were getting people to safety and out of the complex. This was done for as many people as possible.

This couldn't be done overtly, as too many people would want to leave, which would mean others escaping would also get caught. The favoured exit points were to the back of the Mata Kaula Gurdwara, the library and Sri Akaal Takht Sahib.

Whilst, we could get a lot of people out, the problem would be then finding shelter outside, so they would not be simply mowed down by bullets when outside on the streets. The complex was surrounded, but due to the proximity of other buildings and secret passages, a few people at a time could be shifted without detection.

We took shifts at our strategic positions, sleeping a few hours each. The Keertan (devotional hymn singing) and timetable of Sri Darbar Sahib continued unabated, by the brave Keertanis and Granthis (readers of Sri Guru Granth Sahib Jee).

We were now on full alert and aware that fighting could commerce at any point.



Chapter 12 4 June 1984

On the morning of the 4th June 1984 the army bombardment and firing began. We were given orders to now return fire but were also told by Sant Jee that we would not be given anymore firearms or ammunition. We had to use what we had sparsely and then recover arms from the incoming army.

Since I had arrived at Sri Darbar Sahib, my internal meditation had been reverberating out of every pore of my body. I could even hear each hair meditating. I was in spiritual bliss in the midst of battle.

Sant Jee called me to the basement of Sri Akaal Takhat Sahib. Sant Jee's eyes were bloodshot but his face was radiant. Sant Jee asked me, "Do you know what Shaheedi Pehra is?"

I said, "Yes, Chacha Jee told me how to maintain it."

'Shaheedi Pehra' is when you have the meditative pose to use spiritual powers at your beck and call.

Sant Jee said, "We will all now engage in 'Shaheedi Pehra. That is those of us who can utilise it."

This meant that I would now have to hold my internal meditation at a higher spiritual sphere – whilst I would still carry out my tasks. It was challenging to accomplish and maintain. If I were to be disturbed it could mean my concentration levels being reduced and a loss of 'Shaheedi Pehra' or a reduction of its effectiveness.

If this did occur the best thing to do was to sit in meditation and elevate my concentration to these spheres again. In this mode of Shaheedi Pehra we

would also see things in the spiritual world that normal people cannot see and could communicate with each other telepathically.



Only a few Singhs in the complex could use this 'Shaheedi Pehra.' In total there were about 20 of us who could use it. 10 of these Singhs were stationed at Sri Akaal Takhat Sahib alone.

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After speaking to Sant Jee I returned to my station. I sat cross-legged and raised my 'surti' or spiritual concentration; once I attained the state I needed to get to I opened my eyes and took up my strategic position. I could now see through walls of the complex and see all the army installations and preparations.

Through our telepathic network, the Singhs with 'Shaheedi Pehra' started their defence preparations with more vigour as we could now see clearly what we were up against and where the army would try to breach our defences from and with what artillery and infantry. We now knew what to defend against and where to defend from. We commandeered the other 150 Sikhs across the complex that were part of the defence with our newfound insights.

Us, 20 Sikhs who could use 'Shaheedi Pehra' did not like to use our spiritual powers unless absolutely necessary. This was definitely necessary now.

The night of the 3rd June 1984 was the lull before the storm. On the morning of 4th June 1984 at about 6am the army started to fire and bombard the complex. First, normal infantry soldiers tried to breach the complex and enter it. But wherever they attempted this, they were mowed down like ants.

We had heard the boasts of the Indian army generals through our 'Shaheedi Pehra' they had said, 'we will take over the whole complex within 24 hours' 'Bhindranwale and his followers are no match for our commandos'. They had completely underestimated our planning, guile and passion to fight. Whilst their poor planning was exposed in the execution of their attacks.

To this point, no sangat had been given the opportunity to leave the complex or surrender or to get to safety, out of what was now, a war zone. The Indian army was happily attacking it's own citizens in their holiest Gurdwara, indiscriminately firing bullets at them.



Chapter 13

Once the army experienced heavy losses at the entry points to Darbar Sahib two things occurred. Firstly, the Singhs pulled in the dead bodies of soldiers to covert spots and stripped them of their uniforms and weapons.

Initially, the Singhs did not wear the army uniforms as that would have caused confusion in our own ranks. Some of these uniforms were transported to Sri Akaal Takhat Sahib. Secondly, the army now changed tactics – now they would firstly use explosives, then follow up with raids of soldiers.

But once again the infantry entering were completely obliterated. The entering army were sitting ducks, walking to their deaths, being simple cannon fodder. The gunfire and bombardment was non-stop. Pitched battles raged throughout the complex at different spots.

The Indian army resorted to air-dropping in commandos onto roof tops that they thought were secure. The commandos were being parachuted in, but our snipers got nearly all of them, our tactic was to fire at the parachute, this would cause a speedy descent causing serious injury or death.

The army were getting desperate and this platoon of commandos were also wiped out within minutes.

Bullet marks had appeared upon Sri Darbar Sahib and some of the Sangat were hiding in rooms in the parkarma – the parkarma is the walkway around the Sarovar. The Singhs and Kaurs who were part of the defence operation tried their best to transport these people to safety to the accommodation blocks near the SGPC offices.

A lulling of fire proceeded, as night fell. At the Sri Akaal Takhat Sahib most of our activity was centred upon co-ordinating the defence and not actually engaging in much fighting at this point.



We were already down to 100 combatants and members of the sangat joined our ranks, as they knew they had no option but to die fighting honourably or die anyway to the bullets of the Indian army.

Night fell and at about 10pm we saw that the army commandos were now trying to enter the complex with night-vision goggles on.

The infantry soldiers were now being used as a back-up and support, but the commandos were now being called upon to break our defences as the Indian army realised a higher skill level was required to penetrate our defences.

The Indian army used an array of explosives to breach our defences. What the army didn't know was that we also had about 15 night-vision goggles.

We strategically moved these sets of equipment to the points of attempted breach and again allowed them forward into the complex, after setting off their explosives, only for them to fall to their deaths when in the complex from our gunfire or grenades.

We knew that none of us could now rest or sleep. We only ate a few morsels of food to keep our energy levels up and drank as much water as we could, to stop dehydrating. Water and food were scarce, we had tried to store supplies of food across the complex but with all the explosions and chaos, most of these supplies were either spent or wasted.

We passed the night fighting for our lives, defending the complex and protecting the sangat as much as we could. Fighting did continue but a lower intensity as nightfall brought its own challenges for both sides.

Although, we had to ensure safety of the back perimeter of Takhat Sahib and the well – where our weapons were stored.

The sarovar now had dead bodies floating in it. There were mounds of bodies of Indian army soldiers at different points across the complex, this was mostly near entrances.

Some of the defending Sikhs now wore the Indian army uniforms to cause more confusion and create havoc amongst the incoming soldiers.

The firing of bullets from our uniform clad Sikhs would create terror in the incoming army soldiers who would grow paranoid of their own soldiers and a lot of friendly fire ensued creating more losses for them.

We had now also lost 30 Sikhs in the fighting and another 25 had been captured alive and arrested.



Chapter 14

As day broke on the 5th June, clear damage and death could be witnessed around the complex. The army was gaining ground and by 8am they had taken out most of our sniper points, by blowing up high rise buildings and destroying roof top rooms. The army's own snipers were although in safe positions outside of the complex.

The ground assault recommenced at full throttle from the Indian army with them taking control of the Brahm Buta Market entrance and they could enter from here without now being slaughtered. At 6pm the army finally made an announcement allowing people to surrender. Many of those who did surrender were gunned down when they walked to the exit gate with their arms in the air.

In the confusion of the gunfire some escaped back into the complex, whilst others were arrested if they weren't killed. After this, no-one wanted to attempt to surrender again.

At 9pm the leaders of the Akali Dal, SGPC and other leaders were escorted out of the complex by the Indian army. They only took about 50 select people and left the rest of the sangat inside, which was in its thousands still. Now, the army knew that their only chance to safely win over the complex and reduce the chance of further casualties was by using armoured vehicles. By now another 50 Sikhs defending the complex had become Shaheed. Another 20 Sikhs who had been defending the complex took the decision to escape rather than face a sure death inside.

Some of these Sikhs who escaped promised to continue the battle against the government and regroup.

By 9pm on the 5th June 1984 only about 30 of us trained combatants remained in the complex, with 10 of us at Sri Akaal Takhat Sahib.

I now looked down at the Gurdwara to my right on the parkarma and could see the Shaheed Ganj Gurdwara of Baba Deep Singh Jee, this is the spot where Baba Jee laid down his head.



The actual damaged tank in the parkarma, to the right is General Brar and General Ranjit Dayal with red turban

I could see the spiritual aura of Baba Deep Singh Jee physically drawing a line across the parkarma at this spot. I knew what this meant, the army tanks would not be able to pass this point.

But as a precaution Bhai Mohar Singh, his wife Bibi Pritam Kaur and their daughters Satnam Kaur and Vaheguru Kaur all bombed the incoming tank and fell to their deaths.

This tank that was damaged, now blocked the path and no other tanks could enter the complex via this route.

We had all developed war scars. I had bruising on my shoulders from incessant firing from our 'Maha-Parshad' and other heavy fire arms use. Some of us had shrapnel in us and grazes but were fighting on regardless of our injuries.

We were all suffering from exhaustion and dehydration. The battle was wearing us down and we were just working on surviving from minute to minute.



Chapter 15

I suddenly heard the sound of conch shells and drums beating. I was perplexed, by these distinct Sikh sounds as the sound of them was negating all sounds of the battle. Thus, the Sikhs defending Sri Akaal Takhat Sahib were all drawn to these sounds and looked out to see what was going on.

To our utter disbelief we could all see Sri Guru Gobind Singh Jee on the parkarma – He signalled for us to come out. We all ran towards Guru Sahib and realised we were now being protected by a protective magnetic field, in which we were situated with Guru Sahib.

We all bowed at Guru Sahibs feet and some of the other remaining Sikhs who were blessed with the spiritual vision to see Guru Sahib also made it to where we were. The food was delicious and magical. Guru Sahib told us to not lose heart and fight on as his Sons and daughters – He said victory was ours in life or death, as it was a righteous cause we were fighting for.

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As He had appeared suddenly. He also disappeared suddenly.

We spent about 5 minutes in the splendour of Guru Sahib. We were all transported back to our fighting stations as soon as Guru Sahib left. We were all now reinvigorated and fought on like men reborn.

The complex was now being shrunk by the army takeover. The army had now conquered most of it.

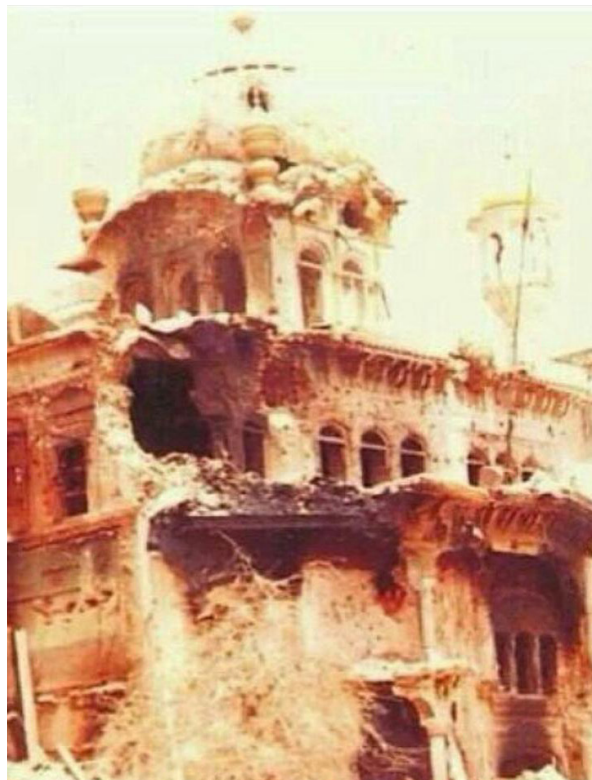
At 10pm an explosion rocked the whole of Sri Akaal Takhat Sahib. The army had fired an explosive missile towards the basement. This resulted in our command centre being destroyed. We were unsure of how the Sri Akaal Takhat Sahib was still standing but paid no heed to the science of what was unfolding and just carried on.

Chapter 16

Sant Jee was now enraged as General Subegh Singh had fallen to his death in the basement. He ordered us to not hold back in any shape or form and to go full throttle in our defences. So now we pulled out whatever 'Maha Parshad' we had left. We fought on defending Sri Akaal Takhat Sahib like this until midnight – all the Indian army efforts were now concentrated upon conquering Sri Akaal Takhat Sahib as this was the only area of the complex now not under their control.

The army now moved tanks towards Sri Akaal Takhat Sahib from the clock tower entrance as the tanks at Shaheed Ganj Baba Deep Singh were now stuck there.

The Indian army knew they could only conquer us with the use of armoured vehicles as they did not want to add to the tally of hundreds of soldiers that we had killed, so this was the safest option for them, now.



The bombed Sri Akaal Takhat Sahib pictured directly after the army attack



Sant Jee gathered the remaining Singhs at Sri Akaal Takhat Sahib and said, "We will now fight to the end and leave Sri Akaal Takhat Sahib." Sant Jee shared out the barfi from Baba Thakhur Singh Jee and whatever arms we had left and we took up formations to leave Takhat Sahib. Fires were now raging in Takhat Sahib and explosions were being heard all over.

I came out into the open in formation taking cover wherever I could. I made my way to near the Nishan Sahibs and suddenly I could see my own body. I hadn't realised that I had been killed by an explosion and had died. I looked on like a witness and turned away, after realising my fate.

When I turned around, I could see Chacha Jee – Bhai Surinder Singh Sodhi standing in front of me and to his right was Sri Guru Gobind Singh Jee. I bowed to Sri Kalghidhar Paatshaah and Maharaj presented me with a siropa (robe of honour).

We left in a celestial vehicle and made our way to Sachkand (the highest spiritual dimension).



The above all occurred in June 1984. I am now reborn as a child. Many of us who became Shaheed in 1984 are already reborn on earth, living across the globe. We Shaheeds of 1984 are back to finish off what we started. We are mostly children at the moment and are patiently waiting for our return to the battlefield. We will free our Gurdwaras and lands, establishing Khalsa Raj (sovereign rule of the Sikh nation). We are now here to finish the job.

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