

Homage to SIRDAR AMAR SINGH CHHATWAL

Iwould like to pay my heartiest tribute and respect to S Amar Singh Chhatwal, who passed away on January 25, 2002 in Chandigarh. Very few people in our community of Sikhs have given their all (*tann, mann, and dhann*) in serving the interests of Sikhism as did S Amar Singh Chhatwal during his last 40 years of selfless service, dedicated to the promotion of *The Sikh Courier*. Even fewer people have left a legacy behind them and the legacy left by Chhatwal Jee will remain engraved in the annals of Sikh history forever.

Reflecting on some of my memories of the early 1960s, at Wigan in Lancashire, England, when I conceived the idea of forming Sikh Missionary Society (Later Sikh Cultural Society) and publication of *The Sikh Courier*. My idea would not have materialized without the active support and involvement of Dr Ajit Singh Buttoo (now in Sudbury, ON, Canada) and later Mrs Pamela Wylem and of course Wigan Printing Press, which gave me financial credit.

Chhatwal Jee got actively involved in the promotion of *The Sikh Courier*, when I left England to study further in New York in 1963 and for the next 38 years it became Chhatwal Jee's life mission. I remember visiting him at his house in London some years ago, and it was an office for *The Sikh Courier* rather than a home. His wife Sita Chhatwal Jee was his continuous assistant in this matter.

We remained in touch all these years. He had told me that he spends his winter in Chandigarh and gave me his address there of his sister. Strangely enough, I forgot to take the address with me every year I visited Chandigarh, except for this January of 2002. I was looking forward to meeting with him this time and reminiscing over our past experiences. Would it be my destiny not to meet him for when I rang the door of his sister in the evening? I was informed that he had passed away in the morning of the same day. I am still recovering from the shock. I will never know whether it was just a coincidence or was it my destiny not to meet him.

The Sikh Courier has gone through a lot of financial difficulties over the years but Chhatwal Jee kept it going, even with his personal financial resources. I hope and pray that this spirit of his dedication will be kept alive forever.

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Sirdar Amar Singh Chhatwal was born into a devout Sikh family of Sargodha (Pakistan) on October 1, 1912. He graduated with Honors in 1932 from Forman Christian College, Lahore. Then he took up management of Chhatwal & Company at Lahore, dealing with export/import of bicycles till Partition in 1947 with a stint at Delhi, before migrating from to London in 1962 where he joined British Civil Service, from where he retired in 1977, deciding to live in UK permanently (Maj. Gen. Dr Jaswant Singh, *The Sikh Review, Calcutta, May, 2002*).

I became acquainted with him when I submitted a paper, *Apostasy Of Sikhism or Violation of Rehit Maryada*, for its publication in *The Sikh Courier*. He accepted it gladly and wanted to meet me on his next visit to his daughter, Mohan Preet Kaur, who lives in Montreal. I met him first time in 1997 summer in Montreal. I found him very warm and lovable personality dedicated to the service of the Sikhs through publication about Sikhism. I met him couple of times more on his every visit to Montreal, thereafter. He would hold my hand in his hands and would continue to talk about his mission of dissemination of *Sikhi* by explaining me that how difficult it is to do so when he came to know that I have also taken up this duty of dissemination of Sikhism through publications.

He told me that he always carried a begging bowl in his hand to collect donations from his relatives and friends for the publication of the journal. It is true that there are very few Sikhs who realize that a donation for dissemination of *Sikhi* through publication is the most pious duty. This is my experience since I entered into this type of service to the Sikhs that many Sikhs will donate any amount to *Sants*, and for building a Gurdwara in marble and gold but will not spend a penny on buying a book or journal on Sikhism or donate any money to support publication of a journal or a book on Sikhism.

With passing away of S Amar Singh Chhatwal, the Sikh nation has lost a dedicated journalist.

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