

Glimpses of Baba Thakur Singh Jee (1915-2004)

This brief sketch of Baba Thakur Singh Jee's life has been written on the 5th Barsi of their passing (2009). It aims to highlight in brief some of the greatness of Baba Jee and has been written in a form in which, the reader can hopefully take practical lessons.

Please forgive my mistakes in trying to write about Baba Jee's Jeevan, please do send us your experiences with Baba Jee and feedback on this attempt, so we can try and make a more comprehensive biography in the future. The front cover picture is the last Gurfateh that Baba Jee uttered to UK Sangat at Heathrow Airport in 2004. A special thanks is made to www.kalexiko.com for the design and artwork for this publication. Thank you also to Sarbjeet Singh and Palvinder Kaur in proof-reading the drafts of this short biography and their insightful feedback.

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Baba Jee's early life

The Sikh nation's respected religious personality, Baba Thakur Singh Jee was born in 1915, village Eechogill, Dist Lahore (Pakistan) to the respected Baba Bahadur Singh and Mata Prem Kaur Jee.

Both his parents were Amritdharee, who recited many prayers daily and had unshakeable faith in Guru Sahib. After the partition they came to India, where in village Sadaruala, near Makhu, Dist Ferozepur, they started to live. From birth Baba jee was forever meditating, merciful, peaceful hearted, imbued with spiritual energy and had unshakeable faith in Guru Jee. From a young age, they would not waste their time playing or talking. When a little older, Baba Jee began helping his mother and father in running the household. Whilst conducting his chores he would forever attune his concentration to the one intoxicating Naam Simran.

From childhood, Baba Jee would share his earnings, food and belongings with others as he saw Gods light in all and always inspired others to become engrossed

in Seva and Simran. Baba Jee's mind forever longed to be in the presence and seva of a true Gursikh/Brahmgiani. They learnt through others that Brahmgiani Sant Gurbachan Singh Jee Khalsa along with his Jatha were doing Sikhi Parchar and that they are respected for having profound knowledge and have the grace of Satguru Sri Guru Gobind Singh Jee.

Baba Jee left home and went to Bhindra in Dist Moga where Khalsa Jee resided (Sant Gurbachan Singh Jee will be referred to as Khalsa Jee henceforth); whilst there Baba Jee took Amrit from Panj Pyare. Khalsa Jee recognised Baba Jee's spiritual state and thus put him in charge of Langar, this seva was performed with much love and commitment and after 2½ years of Seva, Khalsa Jee accepted Baba Jee into the Jatha and taught him the knowledge of God. Until Khalsa Jee went to Sachkand (abode of truth, after leaving their mortal frame), Baba Jee did Seva of Garveye (close associate) for 22 years; Khalsa Jee being happy with this Seva blessed Baba Jee with many gifts. They blessed him with a great spiritual state and said, *"A time will come, when you will perform the greatest Seva of all."*

After Khalsa Jee went to sachkand, Baba Jee carried on his Seva of Langer of the Sangat/congregation with Sant Giani Kartar Singh Jee Khalsa and forever remained imbued in Naam Simran. Sant Giani Kartar Singh Jee had much respect for Baba Jee & would discuss decisions to be made, with Baba Jee. This time was a critical period for Sikhs as there were many efforts being made to silence the Sikh community, as a political and faith group. Sant Kartar Singh Jee Khalsa held 37 major processions which woke the sleeping Sikh masses to realise their identity, as Saint Soldiers.

Daily Recitals & Living

In terms of Baba Jee's spiritual prowess and daily living, Baba Jee never separated himself from the recitation of Gurbani. The recitation of Gurbani was kept continuous in the presence of Baba Jee and they used to talk with others very little, Sevadars would recite Gurbani all day and night in accordance to Baba Jee's wishes. Even at night when Baba Jee used to sleep, which was never more than a couple of hours, the recitation of Gurbani continued. During Baba Jee's life their daily Nitnem changed, but as a basic guide – they used to recite the whole of the Panj Granthi and then spend the rest of the day doing JapJee Sahib, Sukhmani Sahib or Chaupai Sahib Recitals. If they were not listening or reciting Gurbani, they would be either listening to Kirtan from Sri Darbar Sahib (Golden Temple) on TV or listening to Katha, these were the 3 basic ingredients of their daily lifestyle. Anyone who visited or met Baba Jee would bear witness to this. Baba Jee was a reflection of the following verses,

**What are they like - those who do not forget the Naam, the Name of the Lord?
Know that there is absolutely no difference; they are exactly like the Lord.**

(Raag Aasa, Sri Guru Arjan Dev Jee, 397)

**Those who do not forget the Lord, with each breath and morsel of food, whose
minds are filled with the Mantra of the Lord's Name
- They alone are blessed; O Nanak, they are the perfect Saints.**

(Raag Gauree, Sri Guru Arjan Dev Jee, 319)

Humility

Baba jee was an epitome of humility, Sikhi is founded upon humility which is required to efface ego, Maharaj says,

The humble beings abide in peace; subduing egotism, they are meek. The very proud and arrogant persons, O Nanak, are consumed by their own pride.

(Sri Guru Arjan Dev Jee, Guari, Sukhmani Sahib, 278)

The God-conscious being is steeped in humility.

(Sri Guru Arjan Dev Jee, Guari, Sukhmani Sahib, 273)

Gursikhs would make requests for Baba Jee to visit their houses, so they could bless their home and the family could then serve Baba Jee and the Sangat, with Langar. When visiting such homes, sometimes the families would go to great lengths and make elaborate arrangements, of fancy throws, sofas and beds with an array of cushions. On many occasions Baba Jee would ignore the arrangements and just go and sit on the floor. Upon entering the house the Singhs with Baba Jee would take over the seva of serving Langar and serve the family and other Sangat present at the house, many times Baba Jee would themselves serve the Langar to the Sangat.

Baba Jee would also give respect to Gursikhs when they visited him. Baba Jee and the Singhs who were their sevadars would request visiting Gursikhs to say, "Vaheguru Jee Ka Khalsa, Vaheguru Jee Kee Fateh" and not bow down to Baba Jee, Baba Jee would reply "Vaheguru Jee Ka Khalsa, Vaheguru Jee Kee Fateh" to all that visited him. When uttering the Fateh Baba Jee would always bow their head in reverence and clasp their hands. Baba Jee would then give visiting Gursikhs offerings of fruit or whatever Parshad was present. When they were pleased and wanted to bless Gursikhs they would sometimes give boxes of fruit directly to one person at a time. Sometimes Baba Jee would force Gursikhs to sit alongside them on their asan/ bed, so as to be seated on a par to them and not to be seated any lower than them. Only Baba Jee knows what virtues he saw in these Gursikhs whom he gave an elevated status to. Some of these Gursikhs would be famous but many would seem to be your everyday Sikh to a person with normal sight, and not the sight of spiritual grace that Baba Jee had.

When Sant Gurbachan Singh Jee left his mental frame and passed away, Sant Kartar Singh Jee was appointed the next Jathedar of Damdami Taksal (see <http://www.damdamiaksaal.org/audio/index.php?q=f&f=%2FKatha%2FSant+Giani+Gurbachan+Singh+Jee+Khalsa> and then open the link saying "Passing Taksal's Mukhi Seva to Sant Kartar Singh Jee) Sant Gurbachan Singh Jee made this clear before his demise and their recordings from divans prove this. Baba Thakur Singh Jee had fully supported Sant Kartar Singh Jee's view and a new headquarters of Damdami Taksal was built at Mehta at the place where Sant Giani Gurbachan Singh Jee breathed their last.

Giani Mohan Singh Jee and a lot of the other Taksal Singhs thought that he himself should be the next Jathedar of Damdami Taksal. Thus Giani Mohan Singh Jee was declared the next leader of the Taksal by a break off faction; they retained control of the headquarters of Damdami Taksal (at the time) at Bhindra Kalan.

During Baba Jee's tenure as the leader of Damdami Taksal, the Jatha was passing through the area near to Bhindra and the Singhs did a supplication to Baba Jee, that they wanted to visit the Gurdwara at Bhindran and see the Akaal Kothi (where students of the Taksal had been blessed with the darshan/presence and sight of the 10 Gurus). Baba Jee accepted their desire. The Singhs and Baba Jee proceeded to tour the Gurdwara and had sight of the room (Akaal Kothi) where Sant Sundar Singh Jee Bhindra Vale (11th Jathedar of the Taksal) had made all the students of Damdami Taksal at the time have the blessed sight of all the Ten Guru Sahibs. Guru Sahib had blessed Sant Sundar Singh Jee with their presence in the form of all 10 Gurus and then Sant Sundar Singh Jee got all the Singhs to also have their blessed sight (Darshan) (see Khalsa Jeevan by Sant Kartar Singh Jee, for the full version of this occurrence). One of the old custodians of Bhindra, who knew Baba Jee from their earlier days, was very offensive to Baba Jee. He spoke very harsh words, but Baba Jee ignored his comments and acted in humility, saying nothing and they also told the Singhs not to react. Baba Jee chose rather to follow Bhagat Fareed Jee's advice:

**Fareed, do not turn around and strike those who strike you with their fists.
Kiss their feet, and return to your own home.**

(Bhagat Fareed Jee Saloks, 1378)

....

**Fareed, answer evil with goodness; do not fill your mind with anger.
Your body shall not suffer from any disease, and you shall obtain everything.**

(Bhagat Fareed Jee Saloks, 1381)

Baba Jee proceeded to the building where Giani Mohan Singh Jee resides, however the outer gate was locked and Baba Jee had requested Giani Jee's company to have a chat, but Giani Jee chose not come out to talk. Baba Jee from the outer gate made a humble supplication to Giani Mohan Singh Jee and said in a loud voice "*Giani Jee the world is burning in the fire of kaljug, please do parchaar of gursikhi and be benevolent.*" The Singhs then proceeded to leave Bhindra.

This was the greatness of Baba Jee, he did not go to Bhindra and try taking the Gurdwara by force as he could have done, but instead Baba Jee went and said you are a great Giani (man of knowledge) please do parchaar (preaching) and let's move on from the past. At the time of Baba Jee's visit, the administration of Bhindra was in a pitiful state as the Jatha Singhs had a dispute with the villagers and there was a heightened situation of conflict. Giani Mohan Singh Jee was not doing parchaar and was very reclusive at the time. Subsequently, now Giani Mohan Singh does Katha at least once a month at Bhindra.

Organisational impact

Baba Jee had an organisational/ strategic impact upon Gurmat Parchaar and Sikh political life in a number of ways. First and foremost Baba Jee led Damdami Taksal for a turbulent 20 years (during the 80s and early 90s, the Sikh freedom movement led to many Sikhs taking to arms in militancy). After Operation Blue Star, Baba Jee

had to go underground, due to the extreme pressure the Damdami Taksal was under and the murderous attitude of the government regime. For 12 months Baba Jee lived with a number of Gursikh families, whom he personally trusted, Baba Jee would stay with each family for 8-12 weeks and then change location. For 12 months (June 1984 – June 1985,) Baba Jee kept a low profile, after which he took up the leadership of Damdami Taksal. Sant Jarnail Singh Jee Bhindra Vale had already stated that the leadership of Damdami Taksal was that of Baba Thakur Singh Jee's in their absence and that no-one should question the actions of Baba Jee, please see; <http://www.damdमितaksaal.org/audio/Katha/Sant%20Giani%20Jarnail%20Singh%20Jee%20Khalsa/Sant%20Jee's%20Anmol%20Bachan/SANT%20JEE'S%20ANMOL%20BACHAN.mp3> to hear the full recording.

Thus there was no opposition to Baba Jee taking up this role, within the Singhs of Damdami Taksal as they already knew of Sant Jee's guidance. Baba Jee was already highly respected and regarded by the Singhs who were students of Damdami Taksal. Baba Jee was the one who had appointed Sant Jarnail Singh Jee as the 14th Jathedar of Damdami Taksal, before the demise of Sant Kartar Singh Jee – He had stated that the leadership of the Taksal is that of Baba Thakur Singh's and they can give it to whoever they feel fit. Subsequently after Sant Kartar Singh Jee left their mortal frame Baba Jee immediately appointed Sant Jarnail Singh Jee the next leader of Damdami Taksal. Sant Jee would rise when Baba Jee entered the room that they were residing in, and would also say to the Singhs that if you want to see God, then do Darshan of Baba Thakur Singh Jee, this was the respect that Sant Jarnail Singh Jee bestowed upon Baba Jee. Sant Jee would take Baba Jee's guidance on all major decisions that they made, as did Sant Kartar Singh Jee during their tenure as the leader of the Taksal.

In accordance with Baba Jee's influence and role, when RaJeev Gandhi came into power he wanted to try and diffuse the situation with the Sikhs and he sent a delegation to Baba Jee, to discuss bringing an end to the insurgency. Bhai Mokham Singh was well aware of the leading advisors coming to meet Baba Jee and he was quite concerned with the situation, he feared Baba Jee may just ignore the advisors and not even entertain dialogue with them. The meeting was arranged to take place at Mehta, however Baba Jee was in Amritsar at the time and thus he had to travel to get back to Mehta (about a 30 minute drive). When the advisors came they said that the government wants to discuss ending the Sikh insurgency, Baba Jee simply asked them, '*Where have you come from?*'

Advisors: *We have come from Delhi*

Baba Jee: *Did you get stopped on your way from Delhi to Mehta?*

Advisors: *No*

Baba Jee: *Well I have just come from Amritsar and my car was stopped and searched 7 times, you want peace with us, stop this discrimination and then we will consider dialogue.*

Baba Jee did not entertain them with anymore conversation and they went back to RaJeev Gandhi with their tails between their legs.

In 1986 Baba Jee's advice was sought of how the movement should be taken forward and Baba Jee said 5 Singhs should be appointed to lead the Panth (nation). Subsequently on 26th January 1986 a Sarbat Khalsa (gathering of the Sikh Nation) was called and a Panthic Committee was formed (committee comprising 5 Singhs, Bhai Aroor Singh, Bhai Gurdev Singh Usman Vala, Baba Gurbachan Singh Manochahal, Bhai Vassan Singh Zafferwal & Bhai Dhanna Singh). After Operation Blue Star the government was in a hurry to bring normality to Punjab or diffuse the situation and in their haste they sponsored Baba Santa Singh of Buddha Dal to re-build the desecrated and damaged Sri Akaal Takhat Sahib. The Sikh nation was outraged, that, first the government destroys Sri Akaal Takhat Sahib, and then quickly re-builds it, by sponsoring Baba Santa Singh with a lucrative budget. This added fuel to the fire of the attack on the dignity of the Sikhs, and as a result, the Sikhs decided to tear down the government built Sri Akaal Takhat Sahib.

The Sri Akaal Takhat Sahib was built by the 6th Guru, Sri Guru Har Gobind Sahib Jee, Baba Buddha jee and Bhai Gurdas Jee, in its original form as the Akaal Bunga. Only true worshippers of Akaal (the immortal Lord) can build or be custodians of the re-building of Sri Akaal Takhat Sahib, which is what Sri Guru Har Gobind Sahib Jee had uttered when the original structure was built, hence only Baba Buddha Jee and Bhai Gurdas Jee were allowed to assist in it's building. The Akaal Takhat is the highest temporal seat of the Sikh faith and boldly proclaims the independence of Sikhs in all worldly matters, but obedience to God and His edicts in matters of faith. Thus the rebuilding of Sri Akaal Takhat Sahib by those who had desecrated and attacked it, was always out of the question.

Initially after the demolition of the government sponsored Sri Akaal Takhat Sahib, different Sants were given the seva of re-building it, but none of them were up to the humongous task ahead of them. The re-building had a stop and start fashion to it and in the end Baba Jee took on the leadership of the re-construction project, after which, the re-construction made steady progress.

As the leader of the Taksal, during the years of militancy, Baba Jee guided many militant organisations who sought his advice, Baba Jee attended many overt and covert meetings with the leaders of militant and political organisations. Alongside supporting the armed struggle, Baba jee also financially supported the families of Shaheeds as much as he could. In 1999 in a press interview the children of Shaheed Bhai Beant Singh Jee (who had assassinated Indira Gandhi) stated that it was only Baba Thakur Singh Jee and the Damdami Taksal who had given them true financial and moral support after the passing away of their parents (Bhai Beant Singh in 1984 and Bibi Bimal Kaur Jee a few years later). Also Mata Harmeet Kaur Jee the wife of Shaheed Bhai Amrik Singh Jee (President of All Sikh Students Federation) relied on Baba Jee to support her in the marriage of her daughter Bibi Sandeep Kaur, Baba Jee took on the whole wedding arrangements and Mata Jee had no stress in organising anything. Baba Jee also brought a car for Bhai Tarlochan Singh Jee the son of Shaheed Bhai Amrik Singh Jee, saying that *"A son of such a great Shaheed should not go to college on a bike, scooter or motorcycle."* These are just a few examples of the respect given to the families of Shaheeds, the families themselves know the true extent of the moral, physical and financial support they received.

Many questions have been raised against Baba Jee's role in not declaring Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindra Vale Shaheed and some have alleged that this led to many Sikhs sitting and waiting for Sant Jee to re-appear. Nowhere did Baba Jee ever openly state to the Sangat, *"Sant Jee is coming back, so wait until he comes back and he'll take care of all issues relating to Sikh freedoms."* To the contrary Sant Jee themselves in their speeches openly declare that the day that the Indian Army put their irreverent feet into the precincts of Sri Harmander Sahib (Golden Temple) to attack it, the Sikhs do not have to wait for any call or signal they should take to arms and do what is necessary immediately. Similarly notable leading figures of militancy such as Bhai Harjinder Singh Jinda and Bhai Sukhdev Singh Sukha (Sukha and Jinda) believed Baba Jee's bachan and this went down in the annals of history in their writings (please see the compilations of their "Jail Chiitian" letters from jail). Even though they believed Baba Jee's words about Sant Jee returning, they remained active in the movement and didn't wait for Sant Jee to re-appear they got on with the mission in hand. So the argument about Baba Jee stating Sant Jee is still alive stopped people getting involved in the movement is dumbfounded. Bhai Harjinder Singh Jinda and Bhai Sukhdev Singh Sukha were very close to Baba Jee. The clothes they wore when they were hanged were gifted to them from Baba Jee and they felt honoured to be wearing these clothes for their hanging and martyrdom (Shaheedi).

Shaheed Bhai Joginder Singh Harchowal had been arrested by the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) and was incarcerated in Pathankot jail. In the cell that he was in, there was a picture of Baba Deep Singh Jee Shaheed. One day he looked up at the picture and he remembered Baba Jee and Mehta. While looking up at the picture he made a heartfelt supplication (Ardas) and said please help me. He thought that he will probably get martyred one day, but he wanted to serve the Sikh Panth for atleast another year, this was his heart's desire. After he completed making this supplication, all of a sudden Baba Thakur Singh appeared in front of him, Baba Jee was wearing white clothes with a Kirpan drawn from it's sheath in their hand. Baba Jee said to Joginder Singh that his death is in Guru Sahib's hands, that whatever Maharaj wants, that will happen. Baba Jee then told him to escape and that the security agencies will not be able to halt his escape. At this time the prison guards were playing cards outside, thus they were not paying attention. Bhai Joginder Singh put his hand on the cell door and to his amazement, the door opened when he turned the handle. He slowly started walking out and he got scared, thinking that if the police ask where he is going that he will just tell them that he is going to the toilet. But to his amazement the police didn't even see him and he walked straight past them. He then reached the exterior wall of the prison, he couldn't jump over the wall because his body was in such a terrible state after being tortured. All of a sudden heavy winds started and he reached the other side of the wall with the assistance of the wind, it was like someone had thrown him over the wall. At that point outside there were more police officers surrounding the area, but still no one could see him. He made his escape on foot and after about 4km he came to a village that he was familiar with, he entered the village and borrowed some money and went straight to Mehta. When he arrived at Mehta, Baba Jee was standing at the gates waiting for him. Baba Jee held his hand and took him to their room and asked how he was and then fed him Langar. Baba Jee in his humility denied helping Bhai Joginder Singh when he narrated what had happened and how he had escaped from jail. But Bhai Joginder Singh knew the truth and told other Gursikhs of how he

had been helped, he served the Panth for a little longer as he wished and then attained Shaheedi (martyrdom).

Baba Jee always came across as a very simple Gurmukh, Gurmukhs have the following traits,

Listening to the teachings of the Guru, the Sikh becomes wise internally though apparently he looks a simpleton.

He with full care keeps his consciousness attuned to the Word and listens to nothing except the words of Guru.

(Bhai Gurdas Jee, Vaar 4)

No-one could have ever guessed that Baba Jee was involved in militancy or supported it, he seemed like a very peaceful Saint, who cared not for worldly matters and was just imbued in Naam. Those who were involved and those who are still involved, although, know a completely different story. To learn more one should approach Singhs recently arrested in militancy and even those involved in the freedom struggle who can speak of their personal experiences with Baba Jee. One should although approach people from a wide array of Jathebandhis/organisations and you will be shocked to learn of the diversity of those who visited and sought Baba Jee's advice.

In comparison to Sant Jarnail Singh Jee, Baba Jee did not openly oppose the government and chose to speak very little, so Babe Jee very quietly went about their work whereas Sant Jee was in direct conflict with the government of the day. The difference of Baba Jee and Sant Jee was their style of leadership, but the ultimate aim was the same – to get Sikhs their rights and freedom.

In the year 2000 a Sikh wanted for militant activities was traced to be present at Gurdwara Gurdarshan Parkash and the police surrounded the Gurdwara. Baba Jee was furious and he came out shouting at the police, *“You think you can find something incriminating here, look where you want! Singh's open all the rooms so they can search”* Baba Jee was well aware of the presence of the Singh in the Gurdwara and he was discreetly taken to the back of the Gurdwara and he entered the village lanes and escaped unscathed.

Outside of India, Sikhs across the globe were also affected by events in Punjab and were themselves, awoken to their nationhood, and duties as Sikhs. In the UK- the International Sikh Youth Federation (ISYF) was set up by Singh Sahib Bhai Jasbir Singh Rode in 1985. Subsequently the ISYF became factionalised into 3 groupings. When Baba Jee first came to the UK in 1996 the 3 factions were very opposed to one another, they would all meet Baba Jee and discuss Panthic affairs with them. A point came when all 3 groupings were complaining of being politically attacked by groups who opposed them, theologically and politically, and Baba Jee said to them you will continue to be attacked until you unite and become one voice. Discussions were held by the factions and under Baba Jee's guidance they became unified once again, and to this day they continue to be so.

Under Baba Jee's leadership two further Gurdwaras were built. Gurdwara Shaheed Ganj B-block was built in Sri Amritsar in memory of the Shaheeds of the encounter with Nakali Nirankaris of 1978. At Sri Anandpur Sahib on Kiratpur Sahib Road a Gurdwara was built to benefit visiting Sangats.

Damdami Taksaal – An Educational Institute

The Damdami Takal in its simplest sense is a school for education in Sikh principles and ethics. The mode of education is to get students to first become fluent in Gurmukhi and then to take Gurbani Santhiya (become proficient in the correct pronunciations of Gurbani), and to eventually become educated as a Granthi (reader of Gurbani), Raagi (hymn singer), Kathavachak (preacher) or Dhadi (bard singer). Students while being educated also have to live a life according to Gurmat principles and attend Diwans and do Seva in the Gurdwara Sahib.

When the freedom struggle of Sikhs lost momentum, particularly so after 1992, the Damdami Taksal returned to its core function of educating Sikhs in the aforementioned roles. Under Baba Jee's leadership many Sikhs were educated as Granthis, Kathavachaks and Kirtanis. Between the years 1996-2004 on average there were approximately 250 students annually being educated by the Taksal. Additionally, Jathas of Singhs were sent across India and the globe to do Gurmat Parchaar and many Amrit Sanchaars (initiation ceremonies) were held. Baba Jee thus invigorated Sikhi Parchaar (propagation of faith) by facilitating the education of countless Gursikhs. The many Gianis, Kirtanis and Granthis across the world can attest to this fact.

In 1999 many Amrit Sanchars were held and miracles such as Amrit coming out of the walls were witnessed by those getting initiated, this happened on a number of occasions during Baba Jee's leadership, but it was very prevalent in 1999. Baba Jee used to ensure that those Singh's who conducted Amrit Sanchaars were of a strong discipline and at times Baba Jee would order them to do certain numbers of recitations. For example on one visit to Sri Hazur Sahib Baba Jee told all the Singhs that they have to recite 25 Sri JapJee Sahibs on a daily basis, whilst they are at Sri Hazur Sahib and if they don't they will get leprosy. One of the Singhs who was involved in the seva for Amrit Sanchaars chose not to do the full 25 Sri JapJee Sahibs and a few Singhs were suspicious of this, they asked him and he wouldn't give a straight answer and they said you should accept Baba Jee's command. A few days passed like this and then they noticed he had started developing deformities on his skin, they then scorned him and told him you are getting leprosy, don't waste any more time, get your recitation on track and catch up, on the Sri JapJee Sahib recitations that you have missed. He did this and he made a full recovery.

Many people questioned Baba Jee's powers and knowledge, just because they chose to speak very little. Gurbani says:

**To speak too much and babble is useless.
Even without our speaking, He knows everything.**

(Raag Dhanasree, Sri Guru Nanak Dev Jee, 661)

The Sikh of the Guru speaks less, sleeps less and eats little.

They also say Baba Jee did not teach Gursikhs himself, but those who met or did Sangat of Baba Jee would see the lifestyle of a true Gursikh in front of their eyes, thus learn by seeing true Gurskhi Jeevan (Sikh lifestyle). Baba Jee would teach those who wanted to learn from them and those who did their Sangat would be given new teachings everyday. Just spending one day with Baba Jee would tire a normal person, the non-stop reading of Gurbani and doing Sangat, which is all that they did, they did not like wasting their breath by talking but chose rather to engross every second in to devotion.

One Gursikh did get Santhiya (learning the correct pronunciations) off Baba Jee, and many did think about getting Santhia off Baba Jee, but were too scared of following their commands on the level of recitation required and they would not tolerate any slackness in the student. In the Pothi (anthology) "Gurbani Paath Darpan," the Taksal Maryada (conduct) for learning Santhiya is outlined, it states that when having Santhiya the student should read the relevant sections of Gurbani Paath Darpan 25 times (this is to check pronunciations and learn where to pause and take breath) and then read the Gurbani Paath that they are having Santhiya of 25 times as well. For example if one were having Santhiya of 10 Ang of Sri Guru Granth Sahib on a daily basis, this level of recitation would take the average person 6-8 hours. But having Santhiya from Baba Jee was even stricter, the Gursikh who did have Santhiya from Baba Jee was only taught 2-3 Angs and then he used to have to go away and read those 2-3 Angs for about 8 hours at a time and then return for his next lesson. Even those Gursikhs who used to recite Gurbani to Baba Jee on a daily basis would be told of their mistakes in their recitations and once Baba Jee made one such Sikh recite Sri Jaap Sahib 100 times as he had minor pronunciation errors.

In terms of other organisational impacts the Damdami Taksal has been opposed to the interference with Sikh affairs by political parties and especially so in the custodianship of Gurdwaras. Many Sikhs agreed with this view and to increase the political leverage of this voice, Baba Jee created the Sant Samaj. The Sant Samaj was a coming together of an array of saints and traditional schools of thought (sampradiyas), they acted as a catalyst for parchaar when doing joint programmes and had a very close relationship with Singh Sahib Bhai RanJeet Singh Jee (ex Jathedar of Sri Akaal Takhat Sahib). If any edicts they opposed were under discussion by the SGPC, they managed a collective representation and became a force to be reckoned with. Sadly after Baba Jee's demise, the Sant Samaj has little unity and direction.

Respecting Gurbani

When Baba Jee was only a few years old everyone in his village noticed he was different from ordinary children. Instead of spending time talking or playing Baba Jee would immerse himself in Seva and in Naam Simran at all times. One time as the children were playing outside, some villagers saw Baba Jee carrying some planks of wood. They began to wonder what Baba Jee was doing. Using a few tools he had borrowed from someone Baba Jee started to work on the wood he had bought while constantly keeping the name of Akaal Purakh on his lips. After a few days Baba Jee had finished his work, and the villagers who were watching what Baba Jee was doing, saw that he had made a Manjee Sahib (small throne). Baba Jee took this

Manjee Sahib into his house and placed a new cloth on it, along with a new Rumalla Sahib. When he had done this he placed his Gutka Sahib (small prayers anthology) on the throne. Baba Jee also made a Chaur Sahib. After preparing some sweets with the help of Mata Prem Kaur Jee, Baba Jee called out to all the children in the village to come to his house. They were curious as to what Baba Jee had been doing, so almost all the children who heard Baba Jee's call went to his house. As they entered Baba Jee's house he asked them to remove their shoes and wash their hands, feet and faces with water that he had brought in a jug. He then took them inside and told them to bow before their Guru (the Gutka Sahib/Gurbani). After all the children had done darshan of Guru Sahib and had spent some time reciting Gurbani, Baba Jee began to distribute the sweets that he had prepared with his mother.

Baba Jee taught the Gursikhs who were lucky enough to do their sangat the following lessons in respecting Gurbani:

- 1) Always read Gurbani from an elevated physical position, so for example if you are going to read Gurbani in your living room, sit on the sofa which is at highest level from the floor, so that when you are reading Gurbani it is from the highest point possible. The aim being that you don't sit on a higher point to conduct worldly actions but then sit on a lower point when reading Gurbani;
- 2) Baba Jee always ensured that the sevadar who would be reciting Gurbani to them was seated on a platform higher than them and at the end of the bed where Baba Jee's head was, to ensure that Baba Jee's feet would not be in the direction of the Gutka Sahib or towards where Gurbani was being recited;
- 3) Baba Jee always ensured that they never slept with their feet towards Gutka Sahibs or towards photos of elevated Sikh personalities that we all respect

Baba Jee's advice to all that visited them for anything was always simple; read and recite Gurbani. This is what they did their whole lives and this what they preached. If you want to have a glimpse of the true life of Baba Thakur Singh Jee, I suggest you try spending one day where you don't talk to anyone and all you do is Simran & Gurbani Paath for 24 hours. Then we may come near to knowing the exalted state that Baba Thakur Singh Jee had and the spiritual enlightenment that such heartfelt meditations bring.

The passing of Baba Jee has left a void in many people's lives, which can only be filled by obeying their commands to recite and pray, day and night. We can only become great like them, by doing what they did, live and breathe Sikhi.

Authors Concluding Remarks

Five years on from the passing of Baba Jee, no biography has been written, nor has a true commemoration been built to them. Unfortunately, at Mehta where Baba Jee was cremated, there have been no efforts to build a memorial to them. Instead the current custodians of Mehta have chosen to put up a billboard about the Taksal at the place of cremation. We hope and pray that the Sangat's wishes to build a commemoration to Baba Jee at Mehta are fulfilled one day.

Much has been said about Baba Jee and much slander has taken place, Guru Sahib in the form of Bhagat Kabeer Jee instructs us:

**Slander me, slander me - go ahead, people, and slander me.
Slander is pleasing to the Lord's humble servant.
Slander is my father, slander is my mother. ||1||Pause||
If I am slandered, I go to heaven;
The wealth of the Naam, the Name of the Lord, abides within my mind.
If my heart is pure, and I am slandered,
Then the slanderer washes my clothes. ||1||
One who slanders me is my friend; the slanderer is in my thoughts.
The slanderer is the one who prevents me from being slandered.
The slanderer wishes me long life. ||2||
I have love and affection for the slanderer.
Slander is my salvation.
Slander is the best thing for servant Kabeer.
The slanderer is drowned, while I am carried across. ||3||20||71||**
(Raag Gauree, Bhagat Kabeer Jee, 339)

...

Let no one slander the Saints, because the Saints and the Lord are one.
(Raag Sohee, Bhagat Kabeer Jee, 793)

We should refrain from idle gossip and slander. Are we ourselves spiritually elevated to comprehend all that God does and the ways of His Gurmukhs? We would be better guided to stay quiet on such matters or we will ourselves drown as Bhagat Kabeer Jee has stated above.

Those Gursikhs who are truly gifted and blessed by Vaheguru (The Wonderful Enlightener) are not subject to vice and virtue, Maharaj says,

One who knows the Lord in the fourth state, is not subject to virtue or vice.
(Sri Guru Nanak Dev Jee, Raag Gauree, 943)

These Gursikhs get to a stage called Turi Pad or what is commonly referred to as the fourth state of mind which is above Rajo, Tamo & Sato Gun (actions of status, passion and virtue). They become truly immersed in Vaheguru and become no longer bound by actions. Maharaj says,

The Supreme Lord (God) and His devotees are one and the same. There is no fraction of duality in them (no difference between them).
(Sri Dasam Guru Granth Sahib, 136)

As it is impossible to describe God and put His praise into words, similarly it is also a nigh-impossible task of trying to describe His Gurmukhs. The glimpses described herein of Baba Jee, are simply that, glimpses. They are a mere stone's throw into the ocean that was Baba Thakur Singh Jee.