



Dr. Bhagat Singh Thind

Sikh Spiritual Scientist · Teacher of Purest Spirituality

HOLIDAY LETTERS



The Life of Dr. Bhagat Singh Thind
1964 - Christmas and New Year - 1965
Greetings From the Thinds

Beloved Ones:

With the holiday season fast approaching, our thoughts turn to you again. It seems incredible to us that a year has passed since we last wrote to you of our travels. It was in Kashmir where we gathered our thoughts from our diary to let you know about our trip up to that time.

On leaving the Southeast Asian lands where Buddhism prevails, we could not help but observe among the ironies of fate, that Buddha, who denied the existence of God, should himself come to be worshipped as God. He would probably repudiate the numerous sitting, reclining, smiling, and laughing Buddhas that encumber the hundreds of temples we visited if he were here.

We arrived in Calcutta on October 12th from Rangoon, the city which gave us our introduction to India. Here scenes of poverty were heart rending to behold with refugees from East Pakistan adding to the misery of this already over crowded city. This was the picture that clouded our eyes as we drove from Dum Dum airport into the heart of the city. However the sight-seeing tours that followed, uncovered several historical places of interest making our stop here not altogether unhappy. Before leaving the city, we drove by taxi to see Velor Mut, the Sri Ramakrishna Mission situated on the left bank of the wide Hoogly River. It was a worthy trip meriting our reverence despite the sweltering heat and the badly torn up road.

Leaving Calcutta, we could not but feel how the partition of India has brought untold miseries to both Indians and Pakistanis alike. It brought home to us the fact that when the poison of religious bigotry invades man's mind, it makes him fanatic and forgetful of all human decencies. He carries into every situation his fossilized self, his prejudices, glib hopes and perverted outlooks. As we traveled on our way, we pondered over the question: can a secular democracy and a theocratic monolithic dictatorship live peacefully side by side?

The trip to Darjeeling was a fascinating one after our flight from Calcutta to Bagdogra. We traveled by car fifty-six miles up the rugged winding mountain road. One soon discovers that this region is not only famous for its tea gardens, but the scenery is perhaps next to Kashmir, the most beautiful to be found anywhere. From our hotel window, we saw the majestic Kanchenjunga rising through the panorama of passing clouds. Its beauty was breathtaking. We took a trip by jeep to Kalimpong thirty-two miles from Darjeeling. It is one of India's major border centers. Throughout the country, we found the Indian army to be constantly on the alert. It was especially noticeable here. During our visit to the Kalimpong Arts and Crafts Center, we enjoyed watching the beautiful handicrafts being made by the people who are trained here.

After four days in Darjeeling we returned to Calcutta to begin our trip to Nepal. The plane trip to Katmandu was an exciting one. Because of the low clouds hanging heavily over the valley, our pilot had difficulty finding an entrance into this mountainous Kingdom. After circling many times around the area, he found that the plane was running out of fuel and he was forced to make an emergency landing in a pasture which is provided for in cases of this kind. Later the clouds lifted and the pilot was able to fly into the valley air field safely.

To us, Nepal seemed centuries behind in progress...dozing in a slumber of superstitions. The unusual seventh century-old Hindu temples excited our interest and our admiration. It was refreshing to see the perfectly natural inhabitants of Nepal. One could feel that slowly some effort is being made to move ahead in this small country. We drove out of the city to see the winding 125 mile long concrete road which was constructed by India under the Colombo Plan. Also, there we saw the impressive monument erected to commemorate the lives lost in this hazardous construction.

The India Mission in Katmandu is accomplishing some worth while projects for Nepal and we can proudly add to this the help which America is lending. The assistance from both countries is deeply appreciated by the Nepalese people. We visited the colorful Chini Lama at Bodnaith and had an opportunity to chat with him, discussing many pertinent questions asked by him of our country.

On our way back to our hotel, we stopped to see the six year old reincarnation of the "Living Goddess" whom the masses worship today as they have for centuries worshipped such a girl-child. We were favorably impressed by the gallant Tibetan refugees working at their various handicrafts, growing and processing their own materials and their foods. Under a United Nations Mission management, they are achieving a new way of life in their adopted country.

On the afternoon of October 22nd we arrived in Banaras, the holiest and most ancient of Hindu cities which rises on the banks of the Ganges. This city is always crowded with pilgrims, so it was the two days we were there. Early in the morning we took a boat trip along the Ganges. This enabled us to witness the scenes at the Ghats along the River banks with its tiered array of shrines, palaces, and forts. How the masses need to be freed from their traditional woeful superstitions! We drove to Sarnath in the afternoon, which was indeed a pleasant change from the morning's experience where in Deer Park; Gautama delivered his first sermon after becoming the Enlightened One. There were ruins of monasteries built twenty-five hundred years ago with many shrines and stupas still to be seen on the hallowed grounds. We were

awed by the sight of the famous Ashoka Pillar in the Sarnath museum. Its lion crest has been adopted as the national emblem of the Republic of India. Before leaving our hotel for the airport we barely had an hour to see the celebrated silks, brocades, and brassware for which Banaras is famous.

After an overnight stop at the Imperial hotel in New Delhi, our dear friends, Captain Gautam and Urmil Singh drove us to the airport and at 7:00 a.m. our plane soared northward to Kashmir. As we flew over Amritsar, seeing the famous Golden Sikh Temple and Khalsa College, (Doctor's Alma Mater), his heart rejoiced and Vivian shared his happiness. All his boyhood memories were alive again. Soon after we landed at Srinagar airport, where our agent awaited us. He drove us to the shores of beautiful Lake Nagin, where we spent ten wonderful days on our house boat.

One must see Kashmir in order to better appreciate the beauty of its lakes, trees, flowers, mountains, and clouds. The scenery stands unmatched. Our newly made friends, the Jains and their son Promode drove us to many interesting places during the days we spent in Kashmir. How beautiful we discovered the lakes and their surroundings, as our shikara glided through the calm waters. In the famous Mughal gardens of Shalimar, Nishat, and Chashma Shahi, even in late October, flowers of many varieties were still in bloom. The leaves of the trees were autumn hued and slowly falling to make the grassy ground an unforgettable picture. But even with all this beauty about us, we found ourselves thinking and imagining the splendor of the valley in spring.

While we were in Kashmir, we were invited to attend a tea party given by the Chief of State, Dr. Karan Singh and his beautiful Rani. They welcomed us warmly and introduced us to many state officials. Later we drove to Pahalgam, the meeting point of the two snow-fed Rivers. It reminded us of similar places we have seen in Washington and Oregon, overhung by blue forests of pine and fir. As we left Srinagar on the 4th of November, the mountains surrounding the valley were snow clad and winter had just about reached the Vale of Kashmir.

The next five days were spent in Doctor's village which is situated eleven miles from Amritsar. We were guests of his two brothers whom he had not seen in fifty-two years. You can well imagine the reunion that took place: a continuous stream of relatives and visitors came to see us from early morning until midnight. Needless to say we were deeply touched by their loving devotion and their hospitality. When we left, the entire community came to see us off. The parting was filled with emotion. God bless those dearest ones, the simple village folk.

During one of our two visits to the village, we attended the wedding of our nephew, Amarjit Singh to a neighboring village young lady. This was a unique occasion for Vivian especially. While we were here, we visited the Golden Temple and many historical places which make up some of the Sikh history. The sight of Bhakra Dam, which we saw on our way to Chandigarh, sent an upsurge of energy and enthusiasm in our hearts...a feeling of great admiration for the man whose undying drive made it possible...Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, and for India's tomorrow.

We made several trips to Chandigarh, the State capital of the Punjab which was built in the last decade. The city was planned by the famous French architect, Le Corbusier. It has wide avenues lined with lovely trees, modern buildings, and a huge artificial lake surrounded by park areas. With all this, we felt that some of the buildings are not indigenous and born of the genius of

the people. Of course this is our personal opinion and we, like many who live there could get used to them in time. The former Chief Minister, Pratap Singh Kairon, has helped to make Punjab the most developed state in the Union. We found him to be an unusually dynamic and constructive thinker. The Punjabis are a proud and industrious people whose contribution to the life and welfare of the nation is highly respected.

We were grateful to the Minister for his hospitality and his introduction of Doctor to a mass meeting of three thousand people gathered to hear him deliver an address on: "What America has done for me and what I have endeavored to do for America". The address was enthusiastically received.

In Chandigarh we met friends we had known at home: Madam Concorde Brodeur, a very dear friend and Dr. Jain, who received his doctorate at U.S.C. Dr. Jain and his wife Prem were very gracious and their little son Rakesh was a joy to Doctor and me. It was here we enjoyed our meeting with Dr. and Mrs. Piara Singh Gill, whose daughter Nitasha is now attending U.S.C. and whom we see frequently.

On November 16th we arrived in New Delhi where we were the guests of our dear friends Dr. and Mrs. Amolak Ram Mehta, Dr. Jaswant Kaur, and Harinder Singh Grewal. On the 23rd we had an unforgettable visit with Dr. Radhakrishnan, the President of India and one of the great thinkers, teacher, statesman, and humanitarian of our time. We will always remember his graciousness as we had tea with him at his official home Rashtrapati Bhavan. Being with him enriched our lives...God gave him long life to guide and inspire mankind in these difficult times. Our gratitude to Dr. Anup Singh, our friend and member of Parliament for arranging this visit and to be photographed with him. This will always be a treasure to us, and the precious moments he so cordially gave us will ring long in our memory.

Pandit Nehru will always remain in the minds of his countrymen, the grand architect of modern India. He will always be the idol of all who love freedom and the maintenance of peace for all mankind. He died a martyr's death, giving himself unselfishly and completely to the service of his people and his country. Leaving the Prime Minister's residence, we attended the memorial service for our late President Kennedy which was held at the United States Embassy. Those were sad days for us, and we would like to say here how grateful we are to Rosalind for adding those well chosen words on behalf of her parents while preparing our last year's Christmas letter for mailing.

On November 29th we left New Delhi for Agra to see the Taj Mahal stopping along the way to visit Akbar's tomb and Fateh Pur Sikri, both inspiring and magnificent structures. The Lotus room is unique and the Pearl mosque of Sheikh Chisti a gem of architectural beauty. The Bulland Darwaza, the highest archway in all of India was a pleasing sight. But the aesthetic beauty of the Taj Mahal remains indescribable. The first sight of it as we approached the entrance gate, left us speechless. It looked at that moment as if it were suspended in space. We both feel that the Taj is the greatest immortal tribute to love, and is one of the few places where the realization of seeing it far exceeds one's anticipation. We drove there in the evening to view it once again, shimmering in the light of the full moon against the cloudless sky of night. We came away feeling that there is nothing anywhere to compare with the subtle, serene, and matchless beauty of this pure white marble edifice.

Jaipur, the Pink City, was our next stop. The Ram Bagh Palace, former residence of the Maharaja is now a hotel with splendid gardens. What an

enchanting place to stay. Vivian felt like a queen herself. Jai Singh, the astronomer king built a fine and lasting observatory here. The City Palace and the Palace of the Winds were also seen by us. We feel that Jaipur should be a 'must' on the list of every tourist visiting India. On our way back to New Delhi, we stopped to visit the Amber Palace, situated on top of a high hill. It is a marvel of 16th century military perfection which was used for the defense of the land. There was so much to capture our interest here including the exquisite Hall of Mirrors.

Delhi has been the threshold of India for every conquering ruler. They have left their land marks throughout the ages making this city the most representative monument to Indian history. We visited the earlier monuments, the Ashoka Pillar and Qutub Minar which was started in 1109 while the pillar stood there for centuries before. Old Delhi with its old fashioned shopping center, Chandni Chowk, gave us a look into the distant past. We found this place to be a haven for bargain hunters. Nearby is the magnificent Red Fort, the legacy left to the Indians by Shah Jehan, the great Mughul emperor. We both took delight in exploring this famous landmark. One side of the fort overlooks the Jumna River where the Gandhi Samadhi, or Rajghat is located, a reminder of the immediate past. We paid our homage here to the memory of Gandhiji, the Father of the Country.

The legacy of the British Raj is New Delhi. Connaught Palace is the fashionable shopping center where Vivian enjoyed most of her gift buying. It is here restaurants such as 'Gaylords' and 'The Volga' are located with musicians playing popular western music during the dinner hours. Christmas Eve was spent at the Gymkhana Club with the Mehtas, where we discovered that our modern ballroom dancing has found its way into India through this posh club of the elite. We were amazed to experience the legislators at work. On the 27th, the Mehtas and the Grewals saw us off at Palam airport for Hyderabad. We shall never forget their gracious hospitality.

After a day of sightseeing in Hyderabad, we left for Bangalore. We found the capital of Mysore State to be blest with equable climate and panoramic splendor. It is a city of imposing buildings and public gardens and it has developed into one of the most commercial and industrial sections of the country. We wished we could have spent more time here.

On the way to Mysore city by private car, we made several stops enroute, the most important being Sri Ranga Patnam Fort and Somnath Puri Temple, a rare edifice of unusual style. The Tipi Sultan's summer palace remains still remarkably with its show of delicate carving of woodwork and ivory. This State is rich in architectural heritage, and the city one of the best planned in the country, with its wide roads and lovely gardens. We drove to the Krishnasagar Hotel overlooking Brindavan Gardens. This place is something to see by day, but at night, it is transformed into a veritable fairy land with colorful playing fountains and cascading waterfalls. Seldom have we seen a more bewitching sight.

The following morning we were off to visit the Maharaja's fabulous palace where we were given a special guided tour. The splendor of the palace left us speechless: room after room seemed more elegant than the other. The gardens also were a rare sight to behold. Our driver took us to the top of Chamudi Hills where we discovered the sacred Nandi Bull sitting as large as we expected in the quiet of the forest. Seated nearby was a holy man, a sadhu deep in meditation, whom we disturbed by our approach. The following morning we drove back to Bangalore, where after lunch, we flew south.

The city of Madras is the gateway to South India, the land of exquisitely carved temples. South India is as different from the north as any two sections of a country could be. With box lunches, the next morning we set out with our lady guide, Sushila, to Kanchipuram, the golden city of a thousand temples, many of which were covered with carved life sized figures. The architecture and sculpture of these shrines record the process of the successive schools of South India temple style beginning with the 7th century. On our way back to Madras, we stopped to marvel at the fantastic rock cut shore temples of Mahabalipuram. The pride of Madras is the mile long sea front...the Marina. During our afternoon tour, we visited Mylore Temple, Fort St. George, and the art gallery. In the evening we attended a program of Bharat Natyam dancing. Lalita Devi, making her final debut before becoming a professional dancer gave the finest performance of this classical dance we have been privileged to see. We were thrilled by her loveliness of face and figure, her perfection of movement and grace.

Ceylon is the pearl of the Orient as far as we are concerned. We shall always be grateful for including it in our itinerary; not only because we wanted to see our friends the Tennekoons, who live here in Colombo, but because it afforded us the pleasure of seeing some of the most beautiful scenery of our entire trip. Hope and Quintus drove us to Kandy, the historically picturesque city and former capital of the country. The lake and the Temple of the Tooth, housing the most famous of all Buddhist relics, and the Royal Botanical

Gardens, which in an area of 150 acres, contain a collection of flora covering the entire tropical world. These sights provided us with lasting memories of Ceylon.

We noticed much dissatisfaction amongst the people we met here, concerning the socialistic policies of the present government, which tends to stifle to a great extent private individual initiative. We hope in time this condition will change for the betterment of the people.

When our dear friends saw us off at the airport with their darling daughters, it was difficult for us to find words to express our gratitude. But we were headed for Madras and then on to Bombay with the hope that one day we will meet again.

From Bombay we flew to Aurangabad after spending a night in a nearby airport hotel. For years we had dreamed of visiting Ellora and Ajanta caves: Here where the famous Buddhist, Hindu, and Jain monuments have stood the ravages of time and invasion for lovers of art. A visit to these places is a pilgrimage.

Few other sites of past glory can surpass man's artistic achievement as is found here. The antiquity of these caves with their frescoes range from the 2nd century B.C. to the 7th century A.D. For us, the most outstanding monument is the Kailasa Temple, 164 ft. in length, 109 ft. in width, and 96 ft. in height, hewed out of a single rock and lavishly carved and sculpted with life sized animals and images of gods and goddesses. What genius and daring skill gave these monuments their existence! After two and a half days we were back in Bombay where we spent the last week of our three months stay in India. It was a joy to spend this time with Ramu and Harshida Pandit and their two fine boys. Bombay is certainly a city of contrasts. It is India's most cosmopolitan metropolis. The palm fringed shore, the park on top of Malabar Hills, and the hanging gardens overlooking Marine Drive made a picturesque sight as well as a haven of relaxation for us and all who go there.

We managed to find time to see the Prince of Wales Museum, Victoria Gardens, and the Jahangir Art Gallery. Our host and hostess took us to Elephanta the day before we left to see the famous cave temples dating back to the 8th century. We especially enjoyed our luncheons at the Taj Mahal Hotel which stands close by the Gateway of India. The cuisine here is superb! We left India on January 13th on the M.V. Asia. The Pandits were on the dock to see us off for our next destination: Egypt.

How wonderful is Indian hospitality! Our friends could not do enough for us. They adapted themselves to our every need and anticipated our every wish. The Mehtas, the Gautam Singhs and the children, the Grewals, the Jains, both in Chandigarh and in Srinagar, the Hakam Singhs in Patiala, the Harbhajan Singhs, the Mohan Singhs, Lila and Brig Sahney, Dr. and Mrs. Gopal Singh, Dr. Anup Singh, the dear village people, our family and the hosts of others too many to mention here who honored us everywhere we traveled with teas, luncheons, and dinners.

As we left the shore of Bombay and looked back to the coast of Doctor's motherland, we could not restrain the tears. At the same time we gave thanks that our dreams of so many years had been realized and fulfilled. We gave thanks for the many new friends we made during our travels, for the reunion we had with dear ones separated from us for a very long time.

From Egypt we went to Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Israel, Europe...New York City, Washington D.C. and home where we arrived on the evening of the last day in April. We had missed our family more than we can tell you and we were so happy to be with them again. David was still away at college, but soon our reunion was complete when he arrived home for summer vacation. He is now in his senior year at San Jose State University doing his studies pertaining to his business major.

This letter would not be complete without our saying,

.....arrigatoapki meherbanimuchas graciasmerci beaucoup

this means to say- thank you to Ben Daniels of Adventure Travel for the outstanding service he gave us. Also, we are most grateful to those of you who remembered us during our long absence from home with your friendly letters...

The family joins us now in sending love and blessings to you all. Let us all work together for a better world. To maintain the freedom and the peace we hold so dear is a full time task for each of us.

May you and your loved ones have a Happy Christmas and a blessed New Year.

Always,

Dr. Bhagat Singh and Vivian Thind

*Your own Self
known as
Dr. Bhagat Singh Thind
Amritsar, India*

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