

Contributions of Mr BALJIT SINGH CHADHA For Promoting SIKHISM, EDUCATION, AND MULTICULTURALISM

Dr Balbir Singh Sahni
Concordia University, Montreal, Quebec, Canada

The Institute for Understanding Sikhism (IUS), Laval, Quebec is honoring Mr Baljit Singh Chadha of Montreal for his manifold contributions. As a true Sikh, he has excelled in *sewa* (service to humanity) and specifically undertaken and supported activities designed to promote understanding of Sikhism through a spectrum of endeavors focused on the education sector. In the process he has enriched and contributed to the multicultural mosaic of Canada.

Born in Mumbai (less than 50 years ago), immigrated to Canada at age 21, educated at Western Ontario and Concordia University, Mr Chadha, who began his entrepreneurship 25 years ago (with borrowed capital and a single desk), has built a major trading house (with annual sales exceeding \$50 million) enabling him to establish the Chadha Family Foundation. Over the past 10 years, Mr Chadha has come to contribute significantly, as seen in the list of major contributions aimed at the following:

Understanding of Sikhism

- Underwriting and guaranteeing fifty percent of the \$600,000 budget and significant support (\$33,000) of “The Arts of Sikh Kingdoms”, an exhibition held at the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto during 2000;
- Financial support for a course on Sikhism (available for credit to students from all universities) to be offered at McGill University starting January 2002;
- Establishment of the Canadian Sikh Council, 2001;
- Generous support to charitable Sikh organizations across Canada, including the Centennial Sikh Education Corporation (Ontario), the Sikh Education Center of Cornwall, the Sikh Education Center of Montreal, the Sikh Society of Oshawa, Shri Guru Ravidas Sabha, Montreal and the Gurdwara Sahib Quebec;
- Support for Sikh Chaplaincy.

Education Sector

- Establishment of a permanent endowment (\$250,000 each) at McGill and Concordia universities for 10 bursaries (\$25,000 annually) in perpetuity. These bursaries are primarily for Indo-Canadian students;
- Seed grants to students and scholars at French language universities Université de Quebec a Montreal (UQAM) and Université de Montreal (UdeM) engaged in research on India studies;
- Financial support to the Inter-University Network for India Studies attracting participation of scholars from Montreal’s four major universities;
- Funding for the establishment of a Technology Center at Lower Canada College, Montreal;
- Support (\$20,000) for research on cardiology at the Royal Victoria Hospital, Montreal;
- Funding for the Hellenic Scholarship Foundation;
- Development of course material for the Diploma offered by AMCEQ (Quebec Association of Trading Houses) and the Government of Quebec.
- Creation of the Montreal Council of the Indo-Canada Chamber of Commerce;

Multiculturalism

- Sponsorship of the Annual Galas for charitable causes at the Saidye Bronfman Center for the Arts and the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts;
- Contributions towards the construction and renovation of the Hindu *Mandir*/Temple in Dollard des Ormeaux (Montreal), Tamil Temple of the Saiva Mission of Quebec, Spanish-Portuguese Synagogue, and the renovation of the Orthodox Church of St. Markella & St. Irene, Montreal;
- Funding towards the operations of Bharat Bhavan (Community Center for South Asians in Montreal);
- Start-up grant for the Community Center in Parc Extension, Montreal;
- Establishment of International Punjabi Society for Central Canada.

Awards & Recognition

In recognition of his continuing contributions in various fields, Baljit Chadha serves as an advisor to selective departments/agencies of the Governments of Canada, Quebec and the City of Montreal. He has received numerous awards and recognition:

- 2001: Centennial Foundation, Ontario;
- 2000: Sikh Community of Montreal;
- 2000: Hellenic Community of Montreal;
- 2000: International Punjabi Society, New York;
- 2000: Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto;
- 1999: Lower Canada College, Montreal;
- 1999: Prime Minister of Canada, at the launching of

Sikhs in Canada stamp;

- 1998: City of Montreal;
- 1997: National Association of Canadians with Origins in India;
- 1997: India-Canada Association of Montreal;
- 1996: Commission des communautés culturelles du Québec, *Prix d'excellence - Bâtisseur du Québec*;
- 1996: Punjabi Association of Quebec.

Succinctly put, here we are honoring a personality exhibiting the essence of Sikhism in our multicultural society, promoting mutual understanding and respect.

B r a v o !



The Award for Promoting Sikhism, Education and Multiculturalism was presented to S. Baljit Singh Chadha by Prof Devinder Singh Chahal, President, Institute for Understanding Sikhism. From Left to Right: S. Gurcharan Singh Bhatia, Dr Harjeet Singh Bhabra, Dr Bhai Harbans Lal, S Baljit Singh Chadha, Prof Devinder Singh Chahal, Dr Balbir Singh Sahni.

Pride is what I feel today. Proud to be recognized by my community, who have chosen me to be the recipient of this award.

But pride is also what I feel while listening to our rich heritage. Seminars like today are extremely important, not only from the historical point of view, but as a medium to tell our children of our great past. Today's children need forums like this to be able question and perhaps challenge our speakers, which of course serves the very focus of this seminar - to educate.

Listening to Dr. Sahni, giving my introduction, I am humbled and extremely thankful that Wa-heguru has blessed me and given me the strength to do sewa for others. It is only with His mighty Grace that one is able to take any step in life.

In conclusion, I accept this award very gratefully and I hope that the organizers will continue to do the great job they have embarked upon. Thank you.

**Baljit Singh Chadha
Sept 15, 2001**