

fled, but her three cubs were found, captured alive and later presented to the Agra zoo. Fauja Singh's turban was also found in the den. The assault line formed again and moved forward with regimental war cry. After 10 minutes, the roar of the tigress was heard. Singh shouted to his boys, "Tagde ho jao!" ("Gird up and get ready for action!"). And then, suddenly, the tigress leapt out of the thicket and attacked the assault line. Sepoy Sucha Singh was directly in front and he adopted the traditional bayonet fighting stance, meeting the tigress' assault head on with his weapon. As she came at him, he plunged his bayonet into her chest. It got buried to the hilt, inside the tigress' chest, but the momentum of her charge knocked Sucha Singh down. With the momentum, the tigress fell 10 yards forward. As per the rehearsed drill, the soldiers on the flanks turned inwards and pounced on the tigress. It wasn't necessary. Sucha Singh's bayonet had already done the job. Shamsheer ordered the success signal be fired with the Very Light Pistol and 500 hundred voices joined him in the long jaikara of "Jo bole so nihal!". Then Shamsheer rushed to Sucha Singh, who was badly mauled, but on inquiry about his wounds said, "Saab ji main tan theek haan, par woh sherni meri rifle lai gayee." ("Sir, I am ok but the damn tigress has taken off with my rifle").



The loss of a weapon is a very serious lapse in the army! Sucha Singh was assured that the rifle has been recovered and that he was now nearly at par with the great Hari Singh Nalwa for having single-handedly killed a tigress. He was evacuated to the military hospital. A telegram was despatched to Fauja Singh: "Revenge taken! Tigress killed! Turban recovered!" Sepoy Sucha Singh was immediately promoted to Lance Naik and on that day, 17 Sikh was rechristened the Tiger Battalion. The bayonet of Sucha Singh had developed a 10-degree curve due to the force of the impact with the tigress. A most unusual occurrence, as bayonets are usually made of brittle metal designed to pierce and

break when it hits a hard surface. Shamsheer directed that Sucha Singh's bayonet must be kept as a trophy. The bayonet, along with the skin of the tigress and newspaper coverage of the event, still adorn the officers' mess of 17 Sikh — The Tiger Battalion. Later, Misra along with Shamsheer went to meet Sucha Singh in the hospital. The brigadier asked Sucha Singh, "Are you the one who killed the tigress?" A peeved Sucha Singh replied, "I'm the one who got her with the bayonet first, but others attacked the dead tigress too. Nine years later, Colonel Shamsheer as the Centre Commandant of the Sikh Regimental Centre at Meerut Cantonment, was interviewing soldiers going on pension when he heard the familiar voice of Havaldar Sucha Singh. He reported that he was going on pension. Shamsheer took a quick decision and directed the pension orders to be cancelled. Instead, Sucha Singh was promoted to the rank of Jemadar. There were objections from higher headquarters, but Shamsheer had a simple reply: "Sucha Singh is probably the only man in history to have killed a tigress with a bayonet. He deserves to be a JCO! (Junior Commissioned Officer)" I was six years old, living in Agra Cantonment, when all this happened. I remember when the Commanding Officer's jeep came back from the exercise, spread across the bonnet, was the tigress, and it seemed like all of Agra was lined up on Mall Road, to welcome the unit. But the story with all its details and glory was told to me by someone who was there and had seen the whole thing: Colonel Shamsheer Singh, my father.

GURPURABS & PROGRAMME August 2016

No Gurburabs this month

On first Friday of every month **Youth Program** held at Gurdwara Sahib from 6-8pm

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NEWSLETTER OF UNITED SIKH VOLUNTEERS AUSTRALIA

ISSUE 07/16

(Sawan-Bhadon 548 Nanakshahi)

August 2016



Bhagat Puran Singh Ji (Death Anniversary 5th August 1992)

Bhagat Puran Singh Ji is undoubtedly one of the great Sikh heroes of this century who worked totally selflessly all of his life to provide the last hope to the mentally and terminally ill patients. We should not draw parallels between him and Mother Theresa but if at all anyone from India was ever worthy of Nobel Peace prize, Bhagat Puran Singh Ji surely was that person.

UNITED SIKH VOLUNTEERS AUSTRALIA ਸੰਯੁਕਤ ਸਿਖ ਸੇਵਕ ਔਸਟ੍ਰੇਲੀਆ

My Father: Guru Gobind Singh Ji.

(True Story from Gurmat Vichar No.53)

August 1942, a group of us were shopping in Sadar Bazar in Jabalpur. As we were leaving a shop we noticed a British couple entering the same door. As soon as they saw us, to our surprise greeted us with Waheguru Ji ka Khalsa, Waheguru Ji ki Fateh. No British had ever done this before. We tried to ask them their names in English but were taken aback at their request to talk to them in Punjabi. We decided to sit down somewhere and talk to them. The gentleman told us that he was an ex-captain with the police. "I would like to relate an incident to you", he said, "in 1924 during the Bhai Fairu Morcha (peaceful demonstration) I was given the charge of dealing with the Sikhs in the Morcha. I was allowed to use the cruelest of ways in handling them. I was asked to crush them in such a way that they never ever dare to rise up again. I requested to be given the staff of my choice to do a proper job. I was granted the request. I chose the most fierce looking and cruel policemen from the division. We surrounded the area with barbed wire at Bhai Fairu, where the group of Sikhs was supposed to come. It was rainy season. We pitched tents for our protection but none for the Sikhs. The Sikh Jatha (group) started from Akal Takhat, heading slowly towards Bhai Fairu, preaching the message of



Guru Nanak in the villages that they passed through. Before the Sikhs reached Bhai Fairu I appointed a very fierce looking sergeant to take down their names and their father's names. I was a bit shocked when I read the list in the afternoon. They had all given their father's name as Guru Gobind Singh. I was extremely angry to see a false list handed to me. I flung the list away and ordered the sergeant to get the real fathers' names. The sergeant reported that he has tried his best but all the Sikhs insist on giving their father's name as Guru Gobind Singh. My wife overhearing this mocked at my ability of achievement over such a

trivial matter. I was enraged. After accusing and getting rid of the sergeant I took a vow that 'tomorrow I will eat only after getting the fathers' names out of the Sikhs. The next day I chose 50 mean, cruel policemen and allocated two to one Sikh asking them to use the worst means possible to extract their fathers' names from them. Whoever was successful first would be given a medal. The policemen tortured the Sikhs but the reply from even the weakest of the Sikhs was the same, 'Guru Gobind Singh'. They fainted due to the torture but stuck to the same reply. It was 10 am and there was no positive result. I sacked the 50 policemen. Two more groups of policemen were selected one after the other, leaving the Sikhs bleeding and in pain. I, myself kicked them around asking the same question, with no positive outcome. I was dying of hunger by this time. I felt like a complete failure. I called my inspector general to say that I want to resign and to please send a replacement as I would like to go back to England. I left after handing over charge at 6 pm the same day. I left a note saying that no one should ever confront Sikhs again otherwise the government will not succeed.

The Sikh Character

1947 was year of partition of India. It was facilitated by the British on leaving the country. The division of India into Pakistan and Hindustan left both sides in total chaos, lawlessness and disorder. Muslims trying to rush to Pakistan and Sikhs and Hindus trying to reach across the border to come to India. With no effective government on both sides, there was a lot of looting, killing, raping going on. In the midst all this confusion a message came through to Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee that a group of Muslim women (30-35) who had been trying to cross the border to go to Pakistan had been captured by a few people with criminal intent and had been locked up in stables. On hearing this Sardar Ravael Singh Ji along with

immediately and soon the women who had been locked up like prisoners were set free and brought to Guru Ramdas Niwas. Security was provided and all their needs looked after. Sardar Ravael Singh personally assured them every day that he was making arrangements for them to be safely taken across the border to Pakistan where they could join their families. After about 10 days they were handed over safely to the Pakistan police across Wagga border. The Pakistan police was very thankful and full of praises for them. About two and a half years later when Pakistan government allowed Sikhs to visit Gurdwaras in Pakistan. A group of Sikhs reached Gurdwara Dera Sahib in Lahore. Many people from city gathered there to meet the Sikhs. Pakistan police worried about clashes was controlling the crowd. Sardar Ravael Singh was heading the group of Sikhs. Suddenly a Muslim lady came running to him in spite of the tight security and gave him a big hug. Then she said in a loud voice that I am one of the women saved by this gentleman. He is an incarnation of God. Then she related the whole story of how she and the rest of the group of women were saved, protected, looked after like family and brought back safely to Pakistan. Today we live happily with our families because of Sikhs she said. They are a great honourable race. On hearing her story the police and people standing around were very impressed. They thanked and hugged the group of Sikhs.

17 Sikh - the Tiger Battalion

(Lt Gen Harcharanjit Singh PVSM, AVSM, VSM)

The year was 1954, 17 Sikh was located at Agra and commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Shamsher Singh, whose outstanding leadership and exploits in the 1947-48 war in Jammu and Kashmir were part of regimental lore. The unit was out on a training camp in a forest near Shivpuri, which was to culminate in a test exercise. One day, Sepoy Fauja Singh, who was part of the officer's mess staff, went to collect firewood for the mess kitchen. Suddenly, a tigress jumped out from a thicket and pounced on him. Instinctively, he tried to fight her off with his bare hands. After a brief struggle, the tigress caught Fauja Singh's turban in her mouth and thinking that she had got the kill, disappeared back into the thicket. Fauja Singh was badly mauled and he was evacuated to the military hospital immediately, but more to the point, he was extremely upset about the loss of his turban. More reports poured in about the tigress with four cubs, who had turned into a man-eater, it seemed. She had killed two persons from a village nearby. True to the Indian Army tradition, this didn't stop the training, which continued as per plan, and the test exercise was cleared with honours. At the end of the exercise Lt Col Shamsher Singh proposed to his Brigade Commander, Brigadier Danny Misra, that since the tigress had turned into a man-eater and the area was used by the brigade for training, it would be prudent to kill the tigress. Back in those days, shikar was allowed in the country and a hobby for some. In that spirit, Brig Danny Misra agreed to the proposal, but with a rider. "Shamsher," he said. "Killing a tiger with rifles is too easy. Can the Sikhs do it with bayonets?" Never one to shy away from a challenge, Singh said, "So shall it be, Sir!" The die was cast. Shamsher returned and briefed his unit. He pepped his soldiers up by telling them stories of how Hari Singh Nalwa, commander-in-chief of the Sikh Khalsa army, had once killed a tiger with his bare hands by catching hold of its tongue and choking it. It was decided that the unit would assault the general area where the tigress was suspected to have hidden in traditional infantry manner. Once the tigress attacked an individual, he must use the bayonet to counter attack it while the personnel on his flanks would turn inwards to attack the tigress with bayonets and finish the task. This drill was rehearsed to perfection. Next morning, two companies of 17 Sikh formed an assault line 200 yards long, with the Commanding Officer's party in the centre. Bayonets were fixed on the Enfield .303 rifles and the assault commenced. It was a surreal scene: bayonets glinted in the morning sun with soldiers of 17 Sikh shouting "Jo bole so nihal!", out to kill a man-eating tigress with only bayonets! The movement of the assault line was laborious due to the broken terrain but after 20 minutes, the den of the tigress was located. She had