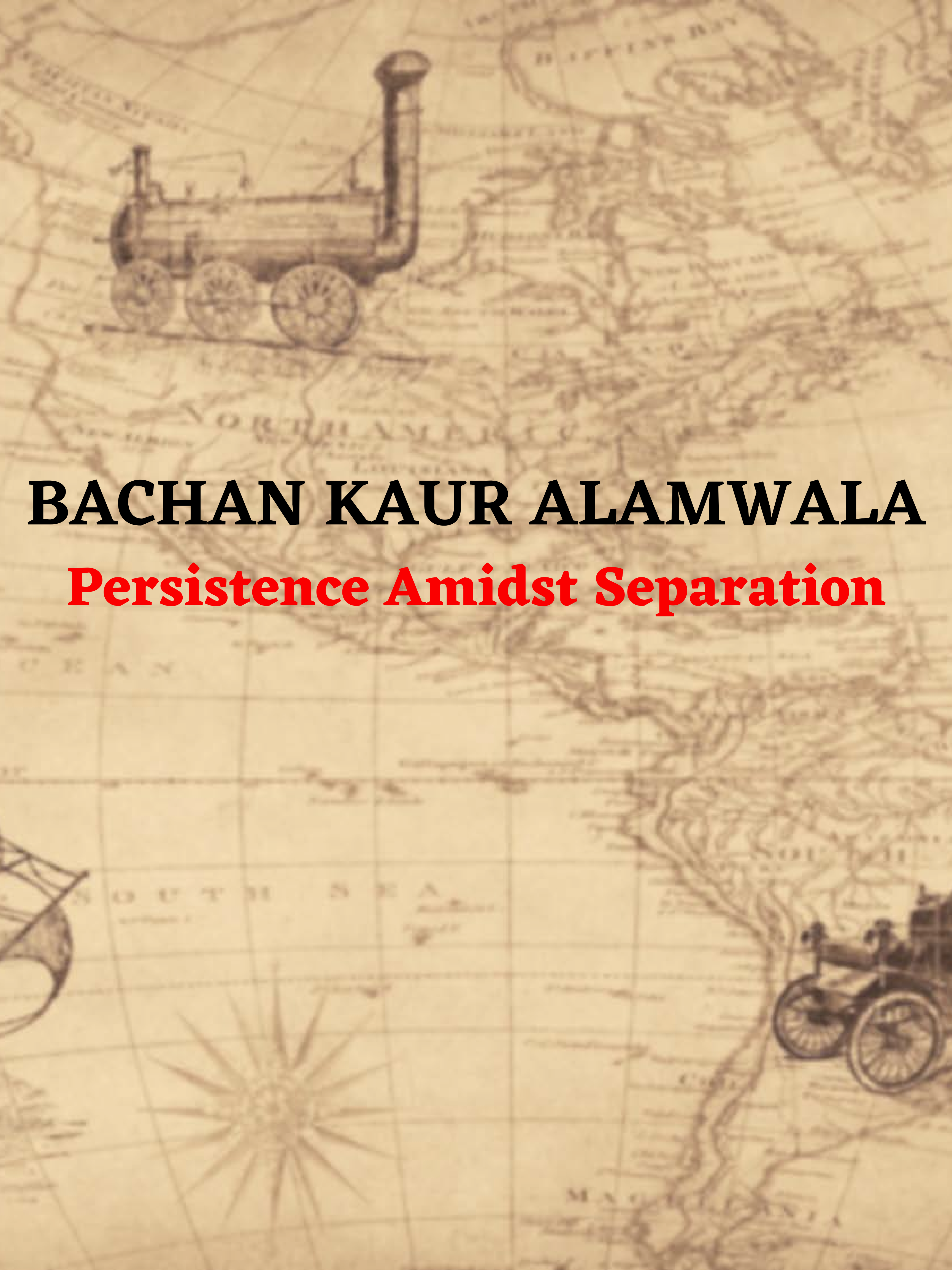




BACHAN KAUR ALAMWALA

Persistence Amidst Separation



Bachan Kaur was born and brought up in the village 'Chuppkiti' (registered as Sandhwan) near District Moga on July 7th, 1928.

She had her primary school education, and grew up with six siblings. When she didn't go to school she used to help her mother with household chores, recalling that it was her older sisters who did the more intensive tasks including making durries (heavy homemade blankets), etc.

Bachan Kaur was married in 1948 at her village Chuppkiti when she was 20 years old to her husband Sarwan Singh who was from the village Alamwala.

There was a four year age difference between the couple - with Bachan Kaur being 20 and her husband being 16.

Upon marriage, Bachan Kaur didn't know that she would be going to Canada. Shortly after her marriage however, Bachan Kaur remained in her in laws village for 12 years before she would join Sarwan Singh. Bachan Kaur's father-in-law had moved to Canada earlier because of his history of service in the Indian Army.



During her 12 year stay in her in-law's village, Bachan Kaur used to spend time with her parents at Khosa Village (near Moga) and sometimes at her in laws village Alamwala. As a newlywed becoming accustomed to a new setting and new family, Bachan Kaur took a lead role in the strenuous housework as there was no one other than her mother in law to help.

Bachan Kaur recalled that sometimes, there were some difficult situations while living with her mother in law, wherein the latter would often be controlling, even saying: "no matter what you do, he won't take you to Canada."

Luckily, Bachan Kaur had supportive parents as they used to visit her regularly along with her brother and three sisters. These moments of resilience, however, were an ongoing theme throughout Bachan Kaur's 12 years life after her marriage, and with the absence of Sarwan Singh.

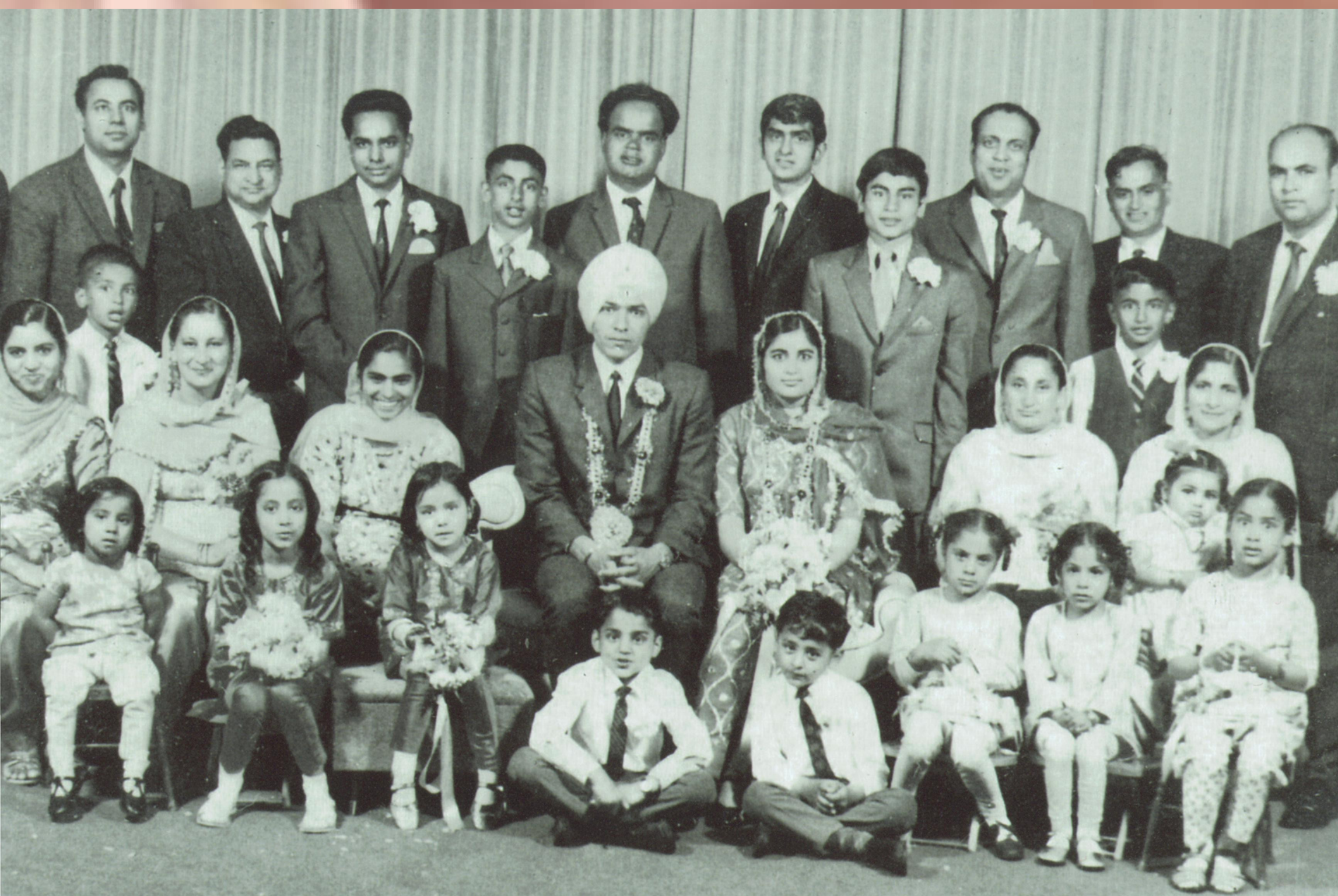
Bachan Kaur and Sarwan Singh had three sons and one daughter, out of which two were born in India and two were born in Canada.



When Bachan Kaur stayed back for 12 years, her and Sarwan Singh kept in touch through letters because they didn't have a phone at home. The closest phone facility was located 2km away at a nearby small town named Baghewala.

Even then however, they hardly made phone calls and relied more on letters only. Bachan Kaur could read the letters but did not know how to write so she took help from others to write her letters.

This barrier in communication was powerful, erasing the very real feelings that couldn't be relayed by someone else.



Bachan Kaur's isolation, despite maintaining close connections with her family and siblings were still significant given the restraints and constraints of Punjab village life in the 20th century. She was not allowed to go out of the house alone and if women were to leave their homes, they were supposed to be accompanied by the men of the household. And so Bachan Kaur never worked in the farm fields doing the kapah (cotton puffs) or rice paddy. They had a big house and on one side, her Bhua ji (Husband's taiji) was living so they had enough company at home to socialize. Overall she was happy with the family in the house.

When the time came to prepare to move to Canada, Bachan Kaur recalled that she didn't do, or even feel anything special. She recalled preparing two to four Punjabi suits and bringing no gold, jewellery etc., as they couldn't afford to have much then.

Bachan Kaur along with her children joined her husband in 1960 and have lived a happy life in Canada since then.

