

Joginder Singh Bains, Darshan Kaur Bains and Giani Harnam Singh

Joginder's father-in-law Giani Harnam Singh came to Canada in 1906, he stayed in Canada for almost 20 years, then went back to marry Jagdish Kaur in 1929, who came to Canada in 1935. The family lived in Vancouver Island, and Joginder Singh's wife Darshan Kaur was born in Duncan. The family stayed in Vancouver for almost three years, and then they moved to Agassiz, where they started a dairy farm. They stayed in Agassiz for few years, and then after the 1948 flood the family moved to Chilliwack and started a dairy farm there. In 1956 when Giani Harnam Singh passed away, the rest of the family Jagdish Kaur, Darshan Kaur and her brother worked together on the farm and later they also started a trucking company called GH Trucking Company.

When Darshan's father came from India he wanted to start a trucking business and do farming. He started farming in Abbotsford and Chilliwack. In mid '20s or '30s he owned a farm in Chilliwack. He sold a part of this land to go to India and left the other in charge of his friends to take care of until he returned back.

Giani Harnam Singh used to come from Agassiz to the Abbotsford Gurdwara just to perform the priest (seva) duties and he did this free of charge. He used to come to Gurdawara at least 2-3 times a week, as he believed very deeply in doing seva at the Gurdwara, and it also gave him a chance to meet various other members of the community. Almost all the families living in Fraser Valley used to visit the Gurdwara on the weekends. He remembers the cement floor being very cold in the Gurdwara that even the fireplace couldn't warm up their feet. He recalls the stories of how the Sikhs that travelled from America to Canada used the Gurdwara's flag post as a guide as it was visible from a distance of 10 miles, to enter Canada and know their way around to the Gurdwara. Sikhs used to stay at the Gurdwara during their tough times and the Gurdwara provided them shelter, without charging any money.

Darshan Kaur was born in Duncan, BC and she stayed in Duncan for about eight years with her family as her father worked in a lumber company there. Then the family moved to Vancouver where Darshan's brother and sister were born. Her youngest brother was born in Abbotsford in 1942. After moving to Vancouver the family stayed close to the second avenue Gurdwara. They stayed in Vancouver for 10-12 years then moved to Agassiz and rented a dairy farm there.

Darshan went to school in Chilliwack. Her mom used to force Darshan and her siblings to speak in Punjabi at home. Darshan recalls her mother saying that if they don't speak in Punjabi she will beat them with a stick. The parents in those days were determined to make their kids learn Punjabi. In 1975 when Darshan went to India she found it very easy to communicate as she could speak in Punjabi fluently and she thanked her mother for forcing her and her siblings to speak in Punjabi as she understands the importance of Punjabi, in her life. She herself stresses on speaking Punjabi as she says being Punjabi one should know their language and culture.

She remembers that it was really hard to even do grocery shopping during early times due to discrimination, but then the Sikh community got stronger and started making more money and the hardships lowered a little bit.

When it was time to get Darshan married, her father Giani Harnam Singh had set a few conditions. He wanted his son-in-law to be a non-drinker with a beard and a turban. It did not matter if he was rich or not but he had to be religious minded. It was Darshan's mama (mother's brother) who brought the proposal of Joginder Singh to Darshan's parents. He had met Joginder in India and was impressed with Joginder's polite manners and respectful nature. He had all the qualities that Darshan's father wanted in a son-in-law. Darshan and Joginder got married in India and it took Joginder seven years to come to Canada. Joginder and Darshan had 2 children and both were born in Chilliwack. They were named in the Abbotsford Gurdwara.

The family is very happy and pleased on the acknowledgement of the Sikh temple as a national historic site. Joginder and Darshan are very proud of the Punjabi and Sikh culture, and they encourage others to be too, as he mentions that in no other religion, langar (free food) service is given to everyone without any discrimination.

He also put light on the fact that the new generation is not fully educated on the Sikh religion and the importance of Gurdwara other than just visiting the Gurdwara. Joginder suggests hiring a professional promoter to prepare pamphlets to spread knowledge about Sikhism so that Sikhism can flourish even further. He wants the people not to look at the size of the Gurdwara whether it's big or small, but instead on the faith and trust they have in the religion.

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