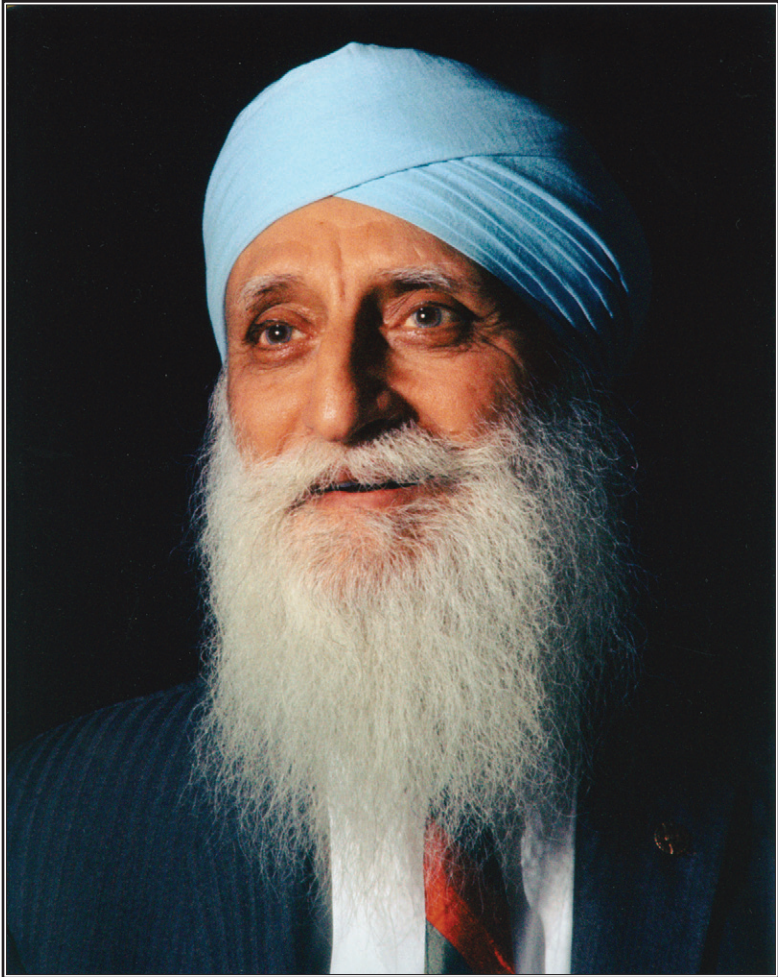


DOCTORJI

The Life, Teachings, and Legacy of Dr. Bhagat Singh Thind



Amanda de la Garza



*Pooran Avatar Sat Guru Bhagat Singh Thind
psychologist, metaphysician, and divine
of Amritsar, India*

Doctorjí

❖ *The Life, Teachings, and Legacy* ❖
of Dr. Bhagat Singh Thind

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— PART ONE —

✧ His Life ✧

Family Ancestry

Bhagat Singh Thind, whose first name means “devotee” in Punjabi, was born on October 3, 1892, in the village of Taragarh/Talawan. The village lies in the Amritsar District of Punjab State, which had been part of the Sikh Empire that existed between 1749 and 1849. (The British took over the region in 1849 and remained in control until the creation of Pakistan in 1947, when the Punjab was split between Pakistan and India—an arrangement that continues today.) The men of Thind’s family were military Kamboj Sikhs, descended from a people of Iron Age India (circa ninth century B.C.) who are frequently mentioned in ancient Sanskrit literature. These hardy, independent people made their first literary appearance in the *Mahabharata*, an epic poem of ancient India and an important factor in Hindu mythology. Their Kamboja kingdom was likely located in the mountain range between Afghanistan and Pakistan called the Hindu Kush.

Thind’s ancestors had earlier served in the Sikh army of Maharaja Ranjit, a descendent of Guru Nanak (the founder of the Sikh religion) known as the Lion of the Punjab. Even before that, his predecessors served in the Marjeewra Sikh *fauj* (army) of the Tenth Lord of the Sikh tradition, Sri Guru Gobind Singh. Because of this rich and illustrious history, Bhagat’s ancestors are well known as respected warriors.

The Thind surname may be illustrative as well of the ancient origins of the family. According to Harbhajan Singh, Bhagat Singh Thind’s nephew, the name can be traced to the vast military campaigns of Alexander the Great (356 B.C.–323 B.C.), during which the leader is said to have commanded his troops to occupy and settle northern India. Harbhajan Singh has personally traced the family genealogy to Europe—in particular, Ireland and Copenhagen—and found mentions of the Thind name as long as 700–800 years ago. The Kamboj tendency toward gray, blue, or green eye color, combined with their likely interracial mixing with European peoples, may explain the occasional light-colored eyes in the present-day Thind family.

Early Life

Sardar Boota Singh Thind, Bhagat's father, was retired as a *subedar* major (a midlevel rank) in the British Indian Army and as such would have commanded a platoon. Bhagat's mother, Isher Kaur, died suddenly when Bhagat was quite young. She had two other sons before she died: Sardar Jagat Singh Thind (the middle child) and Sardar Hira Singh Thind (the youngest). ("Sardar" denotes an Indian male follower of the Sikh faith.¹) Her husband, who from then on raised the three boys on his own, never remarried. They lived in a small home with white-washed walls that is still occupied today by Bhagat's nephew's family.

Leaving his smaller sons in the care of his sister, Mr. Thind took Bhagat (then about ten or twelve years old) with him on a trip to the Andaman Islands in the Bay of Bengal, where he was employed in the police department of the colonial British government for many years. (Great Britain ruled India as a colony from 1858 to 1947.) As a Sikh, Mr. Thind belonged to the group of warriors often recruited by the Colonial Imperial British Army. Bhagat Singh's father served in the British military police, but later became disenchanted with his role as an imposer of foreign rule and colonialism. In addition,

The British were imposing ludicrous and bizarre rules upon the population of Punjab. For instance, due to the "disrespect" shown to British authority, all people, innocent or guilty, women, children, and the elderly, had to crawl on their knees while traveling on the street in front of the house of the offended British party. Such humiliating practices, needless to add, did not stem the rising tide of freedom. Instead they gave an impetus to all to unite against such crazy foreign rule. The infamous Jalianwala Bagh massacre...in Amritsar, Punjab, was later (in 1919) the final humiliation which united not only Punjab but all of India against the British.²

Thind's father was a very dedicated Sikh and actively participated in the growing Sikh *morchā* (movement) to take back lands belonging to Sikh leader Gurudwara Pheru. These struggles occurred during the Nankana Sahib *morchā* of 1921 and at Lahore in 1924. (In the earlier battle, of 86 Singh *shaheeds* [martyrs], 32 were Kamboj Sikhs).³ Despite his long

service to Great Britain, Bhagat's father was jailed for several years for his involvement and lost his military pension as a consequence. He had also persuaded numerous other Kamboj Sikhs to participate in the movement, compounding the charges against him.

Promising Youth

After returning to Taragarh/Talawan, Bhagat Singh Thind graduated high school in 1908 in the nearby town of Jiandala Guru at age sixteen or seventeen. Family members recall that the tall young man was always first in his class and that he was a serious and bright student, although he acknowledged that mathematics was not his favorite or best subject. Widely regarded as handsome, Bhagat had high cheekbones, a long, straight nose, unusually light-colored eyes, and an air of confidence. Thind was also known around his village for asking many philosophical and spiritual questions and for seeking out those individuals whom he thought could best answer them, including his father and others in the area who were teachers and seekers themselves.

After high school, Bhagat enrolled at Khalsa College, a well-regarded school in the holy city of Amritsar. According to another of Dr. Thind's nephews, Charan Singh Thind (the present-day patriarch of the Thind family in India), "Amritsar is a great city, where the [Sikh] holy book, called the *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, is...enthroned inside the Golden Temple, surrounded by holy water, and approachable by a bridge. Full day and night hymns of praise of God are sung, and devotees of all faiths from every corner of the world pay their obeisance in reverence. Such an environment would naturally cast a deep impression on a noble soul like Dr. Thind's."

Leaving Home: The Philippines

While a student at Khalsa, from which later he graduated with honors, Thind ardently studied American history and its literature—especially Emerson, Whitman, and Thoreau—and developed a keen interest in America and its people. He was soon inspired to travel to America for more education and to fulfill what he believed was his destiny as a spiritual teacher, for Americans in particular. He also wanted to help support

his father and two younger brothers (now teenagers like himself), and so on March 5, 1912, Thind left Calcutta, India, bound for America at the age of nineteen, with the status of U.S. protectorate.

At the railway station in Amritsar, Dr. Thind's father said to his son as he was leaving: "Promise me four things: First, neither beg nor borrow, no matter what happens. Second, never commit adultery. Third, neither smoke, nor have anything to do with any kind of intoxicating drinks or drugs or narcotics. Fourth, never live in the past. However beautiful it may be, or however ugly, wipe out the slate and start life anew, every morning. Have a funeral: Put some flowers, dig up a grave; bury your past. Don't keep whining about your fate and blaming it on others. Live always in the eternal One and start life ever anew. I hope if you follow these teachings I have given you, you will make a success in life. If you cannot, the sooner you perish the better for you and for me and the rest of the world, because I do not want a weakling to survive me. My children should not be weaklings or jellyfishes." Thind is said to have looked levelly at his father and responded: "Father, your heroic blood runs in my veins. I will be faithful and true and I cannot fail." Mr. Thind gave the young man a small amount of money, saying, "Son, this is all I can give you now. I have given you an education and an example. Make your own way in life."⁴

Thind landed in Manila, the Philippines and, needing to make some money before traveling further, found work as an interpreter in court cases involving Indians. His pay was a generous five dollars a day. During the nine months he spent in Manila, Bhagat befriended a young man who turned out to be an American immigration officer, who offered to help him get to the United States. Thind finally departed for the United States on the *Minnesota* and finally landed in Seattle, Washington, on July 4, 1913. He was almost twenty years old.

Meanwhile, Thind's youngest brother had not been so fortunate. Having embarked on a voyage to the United States as well on May 23, 1914, aboard the *Komagata Maru*, Jagat Singh Thind was among the 376 passengers (340 Sikhs, 24 Muslims, and 12 Hindus) who arrived at Burrard Inlet, Vancouver, from the Indian subcontinent in hopes of beginning a better life and finding better education. However, due to the immigration policy of the Dominion of Canada, the ship was forced to leave on July 23, 1914. On the voyage back to India, many on board



Khalsa College, where Bhagat Singh Thind graduated circa 1910



*Member's of Dr. Thind's family in India
His brothers Hira Singh Thind and Jagat Singh Thind
are in the middle row, left and right respectively*



Bhagat Singh Thind during World War I, 1918



ABOVE: *David Thind in cowboy costume with his father*

LEFT: *Dr. Thind and David, 1943*

RIGHT: *Dr. Thind, David, and their dog, Mickey*

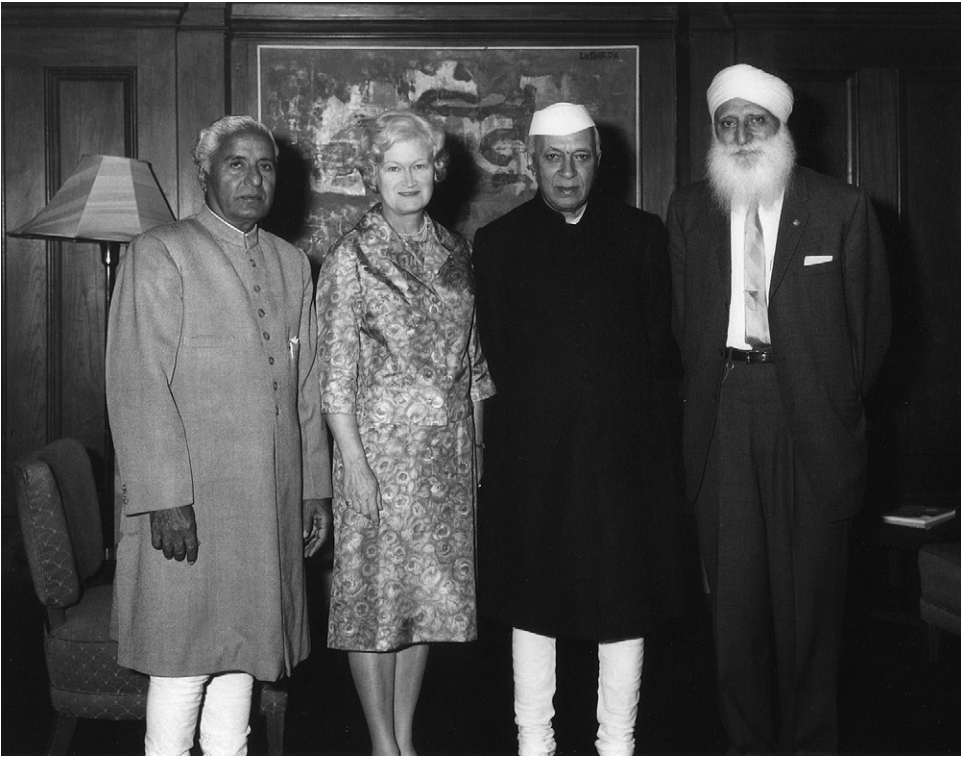




ABOVE: *The Thind family at Santa Monica Beach, circa 1944*



LEFT: *The Thinds pose in their victory garden*



*ABOVE: Dr. and Mrs. Thind with Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru
during their 1963 trip to India*

BELOW: Dr. Thind and Sadhu Grewal, a spiritual teacher and a close friend





The current Thind family in India, 2005



*Justin Thind,
Dr. Thind's grandson*



*Jennifer Thind,
Dr. Thind's granddaughter*

— PART III —

His Legacy

Personal Experiences of a Great Man

*"Whether we be young or old
Our destiny, our being, heart and home
Is with infinitude, and only there."*

—Wordsworth

The following letters and interviews offer a detailed and personal glimpse into the life of Dr. Thind and how he interacted with and affected those around him. From close family members to attendees of his lectures many decades ago, these entries create the portrait of a wise, compassionate, and gifted man.

Vivian Thind³¹⁴

"He was a man of indomitable will, invincible spirit, and unshakable faith. A knower of God, who lived the life of truth and divine purpose, giving these principles first place above all else in his life.

"In March of 1940 we married, and although his lecture tours separated us much of the time, we wrote to each other daily.

"He was my *guru* in every way: A noble husband, he was a devoted father to our son and daughter, and a respectful, loving son-in-law to my parents, whose home has always been with us.

"When, without warning (for he was in excellent health) he left us at 4:15 P.M., September 15, 1967, our loss seemed inconsolable. We discovered gratefully, however, that his very teachings had prepared us well for that loss.

"It is in the same spirit of gratitude for our beloved Teacher that we will continue to publish and republish all of Doctor's books, manuscripts, and teachings in perpetuity.

"We know his completed writings will live on and on as a spiritual guide to his devoted disciples and for those who are ready to free themselves of conditioned orthodox religious thinking.

“His writings are for all who yearn for fellowship with the Author of their Being, instead of looking for him externally.”

Charan Singh Thind³¹⁵

“I am proud to state that I belong to the Thind family of Dr. Bhagat Singh Thind, who is my uncle. My name is Charan Singh Thind and I am 78 years old. I did my postgraduate degree in literature with a diploma in divinity. I worked as a principal in a higher secondary school. I am also lucky to acquire all the good qualities from my family. Dr. Thind’s teachings and philosophy of religion made an indelible mark on me.

“Dr. Thind had a wonderful personality. He was tall, with a height of six feet two inches. He had a glowing face, wide blue eyes, sharp nose, and long beard. He used to cover his head with a silky turban, and looked like an angel. An aura of golden color was clearly visible on his face. Nobody could have ever dared to look directly into his eyes, such a powerful and penetrating look he had.

“I learnt a lot from the letters of Dr. Thind written to my father, where he emphasized to give maximum education to womenfolk and also help the poor and downtrodden, according to your capacity. Dr. Thind helped many Indian students studying in American universities. My own brothers, Harbhajan S. Thind and Balwant S. Thind, got their master’s degrees from American universities with his help.

“Dr. Thind started a scholarship fund for the poor students in order to pursue their studies in the year 1916. Now his son, Mr. David Bhagat Thind, is contributing annually to this fund. A trust was formed by Mr. David Thind to disburse the amount to the needy students. I am also a member of this trust. Prof. Sukhwant Singh Kaura, my son-in-law, is also a member of this trust.

“I have studied almost all the books [written by Dr. Thind] and acquired valuable knowledge, which proved very helpful in my life. I feel proud to have such an exalted soul among our family and pray to the Almighty to send such a blessed soul on the earth to redeem the sins and sufferings of the people.

“I also wrote a poem expressing my sentiments on his death as given below:”

TRIBUTE

Paid to Dr. Bhagat Singh Thind, expired in 1967.

By Charan Singh Thind, M.A., B.T., D.D.

(nephew of Dr. B.S. Thind)

*Thou the morning star of the East,
Thou the shining star of the East,
Toiling along the orbit of the Truth,
Transmitting the Divine Spark of the Truth,
At last disappeared beyond the Horizon of the West,
Embracing the God in His Eternal Rest
In you, I saw the glow of the sun,
The light of the sun,
And the warmth of the Sun,
God, the source of All Light,
God, the source of All Might.*

Jerry Tuttle³¹⁶

A construction and real estate estimator for many years in Oregon, 92-year-old Jerry Tuttle has been retired since the 1970s and now enjoys reading and playing golf. Still energetic and outgoing, he is a dedicated disciple of Dr. Thind and continues to read Dr. Thind's many books often—especially *The Pearl of Greatest Price*.

By the time he encountered Dr. Thind, Jerry had long been a spiritual seeker. He was raised an Adventist, but once on his own he “looked into” the possibility of following a popular local Baptist preacher whose motto was “Jesus saves.” Jerry now states emphatically, “I didn’t buy it!” He continued his quest with the Theosophical Society, the Mormons, and then finally a Vedanta Society group to which he belonged during the 1950s. However, he always had a nagging sense that something was still missing from his spiritual life. He also “grew disillusioned” with the Vedanta leader, who wanted his followers to lead a celibate life. But Jerry was already a family man and didn’t feel willing or able to take such a drastic step.

“When Dr. Thind came along, it seemed just right,” Jerry says, recalling the day Dr. Thind arrived in Portland in 1962 to give a series of

talks. Hungry for spiritual guidance and looking for a new teacher, he went to the first of the free lectures and was immediately hooked, despite some disapproval from his family. “Just to see him and be with him was such an experience,” he explains, and remembers how impressed he was with Dr. Thind’s intelligence. With enthusiasm that has not diminished over the years, Jerry describes Dr. Thind as “so sincere and forceful, with a great voice. He was a real God’s man, with the same attributes as Lord Nanak.”

During those lectures, Dr. Thind gave a mantra (“*Om guru*”) to the whole class, which struck Jerry as a nice change from the secrecy that he believed pervaded the Vedanta Society meetings. “I wasn’t trying to become a saint or anything,” he says, but the lectures had him so entranced that even as a single parent with three small children, he found a way to attend every night for a month. Listening to the “very tall, slim, handsome” teacher’s talks became the highlight of his days. He especially enjoyed Dr. Thind’s playful sense of humor, recalling an evening when the teacher poked gentle fun at a noisy class next door by Dale Carnegie called “How to Win Friends and Influence People.”

Jerry established a personal connection with Dr. Thind, and they began a warm correspondence that lasted until Dr. Thind died in 1967. For the next twenty years, he continued to write to Dr. Thind’s wife Vivian, exchanging family news and spiritual insights.

When asked what he believes was Dr. Thind’s most important contribution during his lifetime of teaching, Jerry answers, “He opened our eyes to the truth: he dispelled the idea that man is a sinner and taught us that we really *are* all created equal.”

Jerry Tuttle now lives in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada, and is considering joining the local Sikh *gurdwara*.

Dr. Amarjít Singh Marwah³¹⁷

A native of Miani, Punjab, Pakistan, Dr. Amarjit Singh Marwah came to this country on a Guggenheim Fellowship in 1950. He began practicing dentistry in Chicago in 1954, becoming the nation’s first dentist of Indian heritage.

Dr. Marwah met Bhagat Singh Thind in 1956 when the young

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