

Dr Jagjit Singh Chauhan (1929-2007)

He was the founder of the Khalistan movement that seeks to create an independent Sikh state in the Punjab region of South Asia.

Jagjit Singh grew up in Tanda in Punjab's Hoshiarpur district, about 180 km from Chandigarh. A medical practitioner, Dr. Chauhan was first elected to the Punjab Assembly from the Tanda as a candidate of the Republican Party of India in 1967. He became Deputy Speaker when the Akali Dal-led coalition Government took office in Punjab.

When Lachhman Singh Gill became Chief Minister, Chauhan was made Finance Minister.



In 1971 he moved to the United Kingdom. He went to Nankana Sahib in Pakistan to attempt to set up a Sikh government. He then visited USA at the invitation of some supporters. On Oct 13, 1971, he placed an advertisement in the New York Times proclaiming an Independent Sikh state. In 1977, he returned to India.

He migrated again to Britain in 1979. In London, Chauhan created the Khalistan National Council and ran its operation from a building termed "Khalistan House". He remained in contact with Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale. Chauhan also maintained contacts among various groups in Canada, the USA and Germany. He visited Pakistan as a guest of leaders like Chaudhuri Zahoor Elahi. In June 1983, Sant Bhindranwale himself revealed that he was once asked by a reporter: "If Jagjit Singh Chauhan attacks India with assistance from England, America, and Canada, whom will you help?"

On June 12, 1984, in London Chauhan was interviewed by the BBC. The interviewer asked: "Do you actually want to see the downfall of Mrs Gandhi's Government?" Chauhan answered:

"..within a few days you will have the news that Mrs Gandhi and her family have been beheaded. That is what Sikhs will do.."

After this interview, the Thatcher government curtailed Chauhan's activities. The British government also instructed him to confine his activities within the bounds of democracy and laws of the land but later, after Thatcher's death it emerged that she and her government had connived with Gandhi in the military assault on the Golden Temple in June 1984 resulting in the loss of tens, if not hundreds of thousands of lives in its aftermath [2a]. The British government still refuses to release full details, only some of which were revealed inadvertently under the 30 years rule.

In early 1989, the Panthic Committee headed by Baba Gurbachan Singh Manochahal, appointed by the Sarbat Khalsa of 26 January 1986, recognized Dr. Chauhan's contribution to the Khalistan cause and appointed him President of the Council of Khalistan, as the Panthic Committee's international wing.

Dr. Chauhan returned to India in June 2001, after an exile of 21 years. After his return, in an interview Chauhan said he would keep the Khalistan movement alive democratically and pointed out that he personally has always been against violence. He died on April 4, 2007, aged 78 at his native village Tanda in Hoshiarpur District of Punjab, where he ran a charity hospital.