

*SIMON FRASER
UNIVERSITY
CONVOCATION
June 12, 2012*

*Convocation
By Dr. Jagjit Singh (Jack) Singh
B.C. South Asian community leader*

An honorary Doctor of Laws was conferred on Dr. Uppinder Singh at a ceremony on Tuesday, June 12, 2012. The following is a transcript of his speech.

Madam Chancellor Carole Taylor, Mr. President Andrew Goff, Members of the Board of Governors, Members of the faculty, parents, families, ladies and gentlemen: good afternoon.

I can't believe that I am standing on the podium at Simon Fraser, one of the most prestigious universities in the world, in the most beautiful province of British Columbia and the best country in the world to celebrate her Majesty's the Queen's 60th year of reign, I am honored and joyful that can be bestowed upon me the birth of my three children, the birth of a Roman, and a honorary degree to top it all. Wow!

I am honoured, humbled and grateful, particularly to the members of the SFU staff who supported my nomination and the Chancellor Carole Taylor, President Andrew Goff and the members of the Board of Governors.

I still feel that I have to pinch my dream; it was a dream of my father's. I was born aboard the vessel Montegal. Although I was born in Canada because of strict racial immigration policies in Canada, my mother and I were not allowed to return until the law changed in 1962. It wasn't until the law changed 20 years of age to come to Canada. I was born in 1924. My mother was pregnant with me when my mother was pregnant with me. We arrived in Canada in 1926. I am fortunate that my father came to Canada through hardships, discrimination and that the Indian pioneers worked hard to help

my father Dalip Singh as married, but because of the policies of the government to leave Canada in 1920 allowing me when my mother was pregnant with me, 1926. I am fortunate that my father came to Canada through hardships, discrimination and that the Indian pioneers worked hard to help

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life was cut short when he was killed in an automobile accident when I was only thirteen years old.

It was the hungry 30 s so even to get work was difficult particularly if you were East Indian. My brother and I were too proud to goon any form of assistance from anyone. My mother worked alongside of us to put bread and butter on the tabl. She would sew clothes for us from used flour sacks and knit socks from used wool. I am th anklful to all those who gave me a job at such a young age.

When my father was alive, he used to recite verses from the Sikh scripture called the Guru Granth Sahib, which are a composition of philosophical teachings of the Gurus, sages and saints before and during the time of Guru Nanak. These early teachings hada profound effect on my life.

I am going to walk down memory lane and tell you a story from my past. So why share this history lesson with you? Two reasons: perseverance and love. Perseverance is defined as a continued effort to do or achieve something despite difficulties failure or opposition of which I had many.

As I was unable to attend school during the day, I started going tonight school. In one of the classes, it was mandatory for students to give a speech at the end of the semester. Speeches were to be impromptu and it was only when I got on stage ready to proceed to the podium, Dr. Smith, my instructor bent over and asked me, Singh, what is the topic of your speech? I said, Love, sir . He looked at me and then turned towards the podium as I was the youngest student in the class and he probably wondered what is this young kid going to say about love?

I started my speech something like this: Love is a many splendored thing. Love comes in many forms. First, there is motherly love, fatherly love, brotherly love, sisterly love, love for a pet, love for friends, and love for your partner. But the love I m going to talk about today is love for humanity. How you deal with your fellow human beings in your everyday life whether good or bad is going to be judged in the eyes of God, not by the colour of your skin, or the garments you wear because they do not affect your inner self.

Only he is great and noble whose life is good and true, whose days are fruitful in the loving service to humanity. Man is to be judged, here and hereafter by the life he lives and the good or harm he does to his fellowmen.

I continued with my speech and talked about how to try to gain perfection in this imperfect world emphasizing the utmost importance of love.

When I had to leave school and go to work, it was a tough grind. I was working almost non-stop, therefore, I had lost touch with all the children I grew up with.

Ten years ago by coincidence I met quite a few of the students who I attended elementary school with from Grade 1 to Grade 8. I had not seen these classmates for 64 years. We had a beautiful reunion and since then a large number of us havebeen having lunch together every 2 months or so. We reminisce about the old days, our wonderful teachers and allour childhood memories. However, lately our conversation has been abouteach other s aches, pains and medications we are on.

I feel very blessed to have been raised in Vancouver and to have gone to school with these wonderful people.

Here in Canada we have a living symbol which that every Canadian loves the maple leaf in autumn. One of our great poets has said, The scarlet of the maple can move me like a flame. The maple leaf, sun-treated and frost-tinted, is not plain scarlet. It is a blend of beautiful colours, each distinct in its own sphere. The different colours help to make the whole not less but infinitely more beautiful as to the different instruments in the symphony.

I am proud to be a part of this diverse and culturally enriched city.

Life was simple when I was a child. We played outside with our friends. We communicated in person, and when we were thirsty, we purchased a coke to share with others equally.

Today, the iPad has become the newest past time. Communication is via twitter, facebook, email or text, and non-fat, sugar free vanilla, extra fam latte is considered the drink of choice.

We are drifting away from the core of who we really are. This shift has us detached from others.

My love for humanity is the essence of my being and I want to infect you with the same desire to do for others as you would do for yourself.

Everybody can't be famous but everybody can be great. All you need is a heart full of grace and a soul generated by love, and a burning desire to pursue whatever you aspire to.

After today, as you leave this campus and embark on a new and exciting journey, embrace your successes and failures with dignity and push on, and make your community and country proud of your achievements. God Bless you.