

Moving around the Dera at Beas would convince anyone that there is a divine power that guides everyone and moves everything at the place meticulously, says J. L. Gupta

THE Dera at Beas is spread over a large area. The whole place is strikingly neat. Very green. Everything, from a small bush to a big tree, is in place. Everyone is disciplined. All, rich or poor, are looked after. Within the precincts, dharma rules. But, it does not connote religion. It means a system of values. A 'science of ethics.' This concept guides each action. Not surprisingly, the place has an aura. A rare rhythm. A sweet scent. It emits eternal peace.

Peace, in today's world torn by stress and strife? Difficult to believe? Try it. The doors of the Dera are always open. To everyone. It is there for anyone to see. I have.

It was Saturday. My family and I had reached the Dera after four in the afternoon. Baba Ji — the Master — was meeting people from abroad at 5.30 pm. They had come to the Dera from all over the world. Probably, in search of eternal peace. To know the way to overcome the stresses and strains of the present-day life. Some of them had questions to ask. As a special concession, granted at the instance of a kind elder, even I was allowed to attend this session. I was

happy. Also inquisitive.

We had been told to keep sitting when the Master arrived. While I was still thinking about the possible reasons, He had reached. On the dot. He is young. Much younger than most of the men and women who were seated in front of him. His pace was quick. The posture, erect. He took off the shoes before taking his seat at the raised platform. Looked around. It felt as if He gave everyone a good look. Possibly, His way to bless. A few words from one of the followers. And then the Master answered questions. One by one. In all, three persons had shared their problems. The answers were clear and straightforward. There was no ambiguity. No ifs and buts.

This was the end of the first session. I was back to my room in the hostel. A very compact and comfortable place. All provisions to meet the normal needs.

As a rule, the dinner is served early. Thus, it was not surprising that soon after the congregation, all the 350 persons staying in the hostel had moved to the dining hall. There was plenty of good food. The European and *desi* varieties. Steaming hot. There was a distinct aroma in

the air. A mere look at the layout had tickled the taste buds. The place pepped up the appetite. I had my fill. And then, a little walk. A little talk. I was told that the room lights were expected to be out at nine. The morning alarm is at three. Everyone was expected to be up in the early hours of the morning. In *Brahma Mahurat*. It is con-

Hearing a melodious tune. As if, the words of a morning prayer. There were other sounds too. At regular intervals. A bird? A tape? The Master's magic? Various questions had raced through the mind. I was not sure. I went out of the room. In the open. Could see nothing. Yet, there were sounds. Very clear. All around. Soothing to the senses.

There are a large number of buildings. More are under construction. Walking casually, I had reached the area for the *langar*. Huge. Talked to a person. Was told that 50,000 people are served food in 10 minutes. At the *Bhandara* (the main congregation), the number exceeds half a million. And everyone eats. Then, there is the huge hospital complex.

would convince anyone that there is a divine power that guides everyone and moves everything at the Dera. Very meticulously. All the time. As if, with a clockwork precision.

I came back to the room after a good walk. It was not even seven. Yet, I was hungry. Finally, at 7.15, the breakfast was served. Even the 15 minutes of waiting had seemed

Obviously, the place had made a difference.

Then everyone had proceeded for the morning *Kirtan*. The Master's Sunday morning sermon to the congregation. The place seemed like a mass of men and women. A large crowd of more than two lakh had already gathered. By 8.30 am. Under, what must be one of the largest areas under a roof, in the country. The people were still pouring in. From all directions. In large numbers. But, there was complete order. Total discipline. No noise. Even a whisper could be heard. And punctually at nine, the Master had taken his seat. Soon he was addressing the *sangat*.

He spoke in Punjabi. Exhorted everyone to tame the mind. Control the five senses. To be a good human being. In deed and in action. To balance the *karmic* actions. To yearn for only spiritual wealth. The time (probably two hours) had passed too fast. Nobody had moved, talked or yawned. Those from abroad were sitting still. Despite the fact that they may not have followed or understood even a word. Obviously, there was an overwhelming desire to be in His presence. At the end, there was a satisfactory feeling of a lesson in spirituality. Not of a discourse on the comparative merits of a sect or religion over any other.

And then there was the much-awaited audience with the Master. For the family. At His house. A chance to see

Him in flesh and blood. To be in His presence. To sit just next to Him.

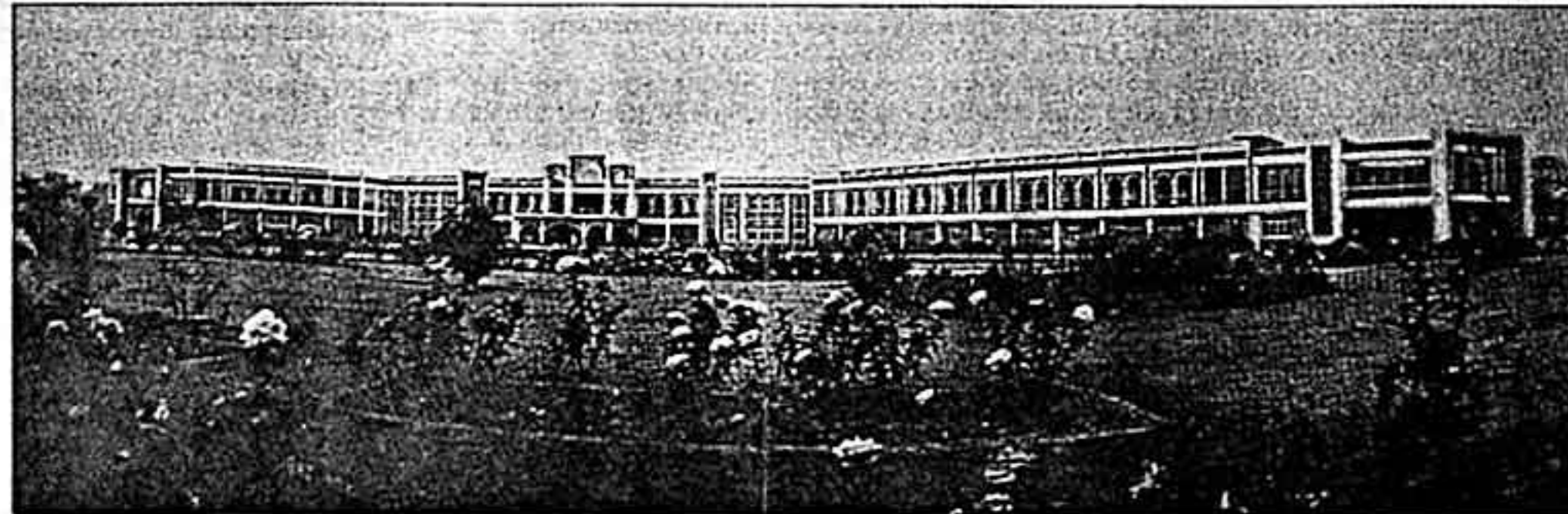
A handsome face. The flowing beard. A radiant look. A serene expression. A divine presence. And the little child of less than three was the first to put his head at His feet. Without being asked. Despite His stopping him. Out of sheer reverence.

He was patient and understanding. He bore with us for more than half an hour. There was never a look of impatience. Despite the fact that many people were waiting. At the end, we knew exactly why the Master desired everyone to totally abhor alcohol and to take vegetarian food only.

On the way back, we noticed the place where people donate money. People were dropping good sums of money into a structure of brick and mortar. All totally voluntarily. And at the end of each day, there is plenty. For everything and everyone. A quick lunch and we were ready to leave. We came away. But, most reluctantly. How I wished to stay on! Why? Because, there was rare discipline? A total peace? Or because the environment was blissful? There was a bit of everything. All that may lead to a mortal's salvation.

The day at the Dera seemed to have passed too fast. But, its impact is still there. How long would it last? A lifetime? One can only hope and pray. I do.

A day at the Dera



The Maharaj Sawan Singh Charitable Hospital

sidered to be good for the body and the mind.

I was asleep. Probably, well before nine. Even a knock on the door (of which I was told in the morning) had not proved enough to wake me up. And I had not heard the morning gong either. Obviously, I had slept rather well. Had got up at four.

The mystery had persisted. I was curious. Went out again. Walked around. Plenty of open area. Fresh and cool air. Very refreshing. People were moving in different directions. Mostly volunteers reporting for their jobs. For the *seva* of love and devotion. Totally, selfless service. A permanent feature of the place.

Built upon the foundation of 'love and compassion of Maharaj Charan Singh.' Symbolic of 'the humility and dedication of the *sevadars*.' The Maharaj Sawan Singh Charitable Hospital is a source of help and hope for the sick and needy. It is doing excellent service to society.

Moving around the place

much too long. I had large helpings of porridge and milk with plenty of brown sugar. Followed by toasts with butter, jam and marmalade so generously supplied by the kind and ever-ready Mrs Desai. Even the kids who would normally get up late were ready. They too had breakfast before eight. A little unusual. But, true.