

FOREWORD

“No man ever steps in the same river twice, for it’s not the same river and he’s not the same man”

—Heraclitus



Sayantan Chakravarty

Orson Wells, producer, co-screenwriter, director and star of the 1941 mystery drama movie *Citizen Kane*—voted on several occasions as the greatest film of all time—would say, “There’s no biography so interesting as the one in which the biographer is present.” It would be an understatement to say that Harvinder Sahota, incidentally born in the year *Citizen Kane* was made, has been alive and ever present during the production of this biography that has taken about 10 months in the making. He is in fact at the very heart of it, the everlasting soul of this biography, and indeed its exceptional protagonist. His immigrant story is as compelling and riveting as it can get, the narrative is punctuated with pictures which tell a thousand words of their own.

A cardiologist who grew up in different parts of Punjab since his father was posted at various towns by the Indian Railways that employed him, Sahota dreamt of seeing the world from an early age. *The Tribune* newspaper was a regular feature at the Sahota house and young Harvinder grew up reading it from cover to cover, with particular interest in world affairs. It was that interest that made him leave home after completing his graduation in medicine and seek out the world. He went to England to specialize in cardiology, and seven years later, by which time he had brought home a *soni Punjabi kudi* (Asha Sahota, his wife), set out for the New World. He landed in New York in 1974, and from then on swiftly climbed the steps of success. He shot to fame by inventing the perfusion heart balloon, and conducted the angioplasty procedure—which those days was in its infancy—in many parts of the world, including India, for the first time.

He found his moorings in California, a state where he was reluctant to arrive initially for fear of earthquakes, but one where destiny would find him a permanent settlement. It is in Southern California that he has lived since 1977, and apart from excelling in cardiology has tried his hand in business, only to realize that he was not quite cut out for it. Deeply conscious and abiding by the value system instilled in him by his parents, Sahota set up a Chair for Sikh Studies in the name of his beloved mother Bibi Dhan Kaur Sahota at the School of Social Sciences at the University of California at Irvine for a sum of USD 1.5 million. This was to be one among several other Sikh Semester Studies that he has set up at colleges and universities elsewhere in Southern California.

Sahota demonstrates a keen interest in the history of the world. He is a living encyclopedia in happenings and events going on in different parts of the globe and can be a conversationalist’s delight. From politics and business, social issues and geography, his areas of knowledge are vast, and tremendous. Time spent with him can be uplifting because he backs



up his knowledge with lessons from his life experiences. Inside, he remains deeply spiritual and compassionate.

He also remains a generous philanthropist, and socially very active. His interest in political developments is such that he mixes up with leaders across the spectrum, often helping out during campaigns. It comes as no surprise that his childhood interest in happenings around the globe has led him to become a Trustee on the Board of the World Affairs Council of Orange County, an organization with which he spends considerable time and energy.

As you leaf through the pages, this book will serve you many lessons, not least among them in the words of Soren Kierkegaard, the Danish philosopher of repute, that “Life can only be understood backwards, but it must be lived forwards.”

Indeed, during the making of this biography, Sahota has been able to review his own life looking backwards, and has spelt out some of the lessons that he’s learnt going forwards. Like Orson Wells says, he remains alive and present in this biography, a tribute to his success and integrity as a human being, and as an extraordinary cardiologist.

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