



**Col (Dr.) Daya Singh Khera**

(01-08-1991 to 26-07-1999) Or **The Fourth Phase**

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**Col (Dr.) Daya Singh Khera's contributions**

*(published in 'The Eagle' of October, 2001)*

The school is forty years old. It has seen many ups and downs in its history. It has also seen many Headmasters occupy the coveted seat. Although, the contribution to 'The PPS' of **Mr. J.K. Kate**, the founder headmaster may be unmatched in many ways, each headmaster has left his own thumbprint on the school history depending on

his personality and vision. **Dr. Daya Singh Khera**'s contribution, as Headmaster, is not known to many Old Nabhaites, partly because ONA was inactive during his tenure. **Dr. Daya Singh Khera** took over The PPS in 1991 when school was caught in the after effects of extremist movement which was sweeping Punjab at that time. Very few students joined school, leading to financial difficulties. The School was in need of funds. The morale was at a low ebb and the discipline fell short of desirable. To top it all, many senior staff members left the school in the year 1990-91. **Mr G.S.Punia, Mr PN Onial, Mr SML Nigam, Mr KK Bansal (passed away), Mr and Mrs Rudi Abraham, Mrs. JN Johri, Mrs Sarkar, Mr RS Musafir, Mr KMP Menon, Mr OP Sharma** all left the School on completion of their service or for better prospects. The support staff were in union mode. They were agitating all the time. Dr Khera's request to the government for funds was turned down. The Board was reluctant to raise the fees as the School was not getting enough students. Practicing strict economy, he was able to turn around school finances by the end of first year. By the time he left, the school had a significant reserve fund and was financially sound. He was able to restore discipline in School. The Junior School Dining Hall (the only new building till then, which architecturally blends with the parent building in The PPS) and Guest House for parents were constructed during his tenure. The dormitory in Junior School and Girls Hostel were started by him. He also built two high rise water tanks to augment water supply. All buildings were repaired and addition of new dormitories, bathrooms and toilets was carried out. Despite a bye-pass surgery, he worked tirelessly from 6am to 10pm. It is unfortunate that the end of his tenure was marred by the temple controversy created by some local leaders; which too, he finally managed to resolve. The ONA acknowledges the contribution of **Dr. Daya Singh Khera** to 'The PPS'. No other Headmaster had to face so many difficulties, as he had to, in their tenure. He literally, steered the School out of an emergency. (Email address : [dayasinghkhera@hotmail.com](mailto:dayasinghkhera@hotmail.com)).



*Col Khera gives a farewell present on behalf of ONA to Lt Gen TK Sapru, Western Army Commander.*

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## Col (Dr.) Daya Singh Khera

*(Excerpts from the Chronicle)*



*Col DS Khera with his Staff.*

Col Dr Daya Singh Khera, a post graduate in Geography and Education and Ph.D. in Education, also held a Diploma in Physical Education. Prior to joining the Indian Army, he had served as a lecturer in Government College, Ajmer, and Lohia College, Rajasthan. During his service in the army he served as Principal of Sainik School, Nagrota (1970-74), and of Sainik School, Rewa (1983-88).

Col Khera took over as Headmaster from officiating Headmaster, Mr GS Punia on latter's retirement from The PPS on 1st Aug,1999. He stressed the need of maintaining proper discipline in school. He immediately re-introduced the system of supervised evening preps and weekly tests of two subjects each, every Monday. The old blackboards in classrooms were replaced by fiber boards. In August 1992, Col Khera launched the "Quit Parthenium Movement" (Congress Grass) in the school. The obnoxious weed had taken firm roots at number of places in the campus, and the students were given the license to uproot it at sight. The enthusiastic students weeded out the congress grass within a few days, though some not so dangerous plants also bore the brunt. A tree plantation drive was also launched and a large number of saplings were planted at different places in the campus. The school buildings were repaired and renovated and more dormitories, bathrooms and toilets added. Two high rise water tanks, one in Junior School and one near auditorium were constructed



during his time. Raja Narinder Singh, local MLA, inaugurated the new Dining Hall in the Junior Section with a capacity of 450 students. The old Dining Hall was converted into a spacious Library. The unique feature of the hall was, that it was designed to resemble the main building architecturally. The demand for a boarding house for girls had become strong over the years and Col Khera saw to it that it was ready in April 1994. He also oversaw Construction of 350 feet boundary wall behind the Junior School to secure the campus and Installation of more solar heating panels in the school thus reducing electricity costs.



*The Junior School Dining Hall Named after General Gurbachan was inaugurated by Raja Narinder Singh. Picture shows General Buch's son Col DS Grewal's presence at the occasion. Approach to Dining Hall. Pictures of the two water tanks, one behind dining hall of Junior School and other to right of Auditorium behind Senior School.*

Col Khera initiated a system of public speaking where two students were required to speak in the morning assembly on the topic of their choice. The idea was to make

them shed their inhibitions and overcome stage fear. A point system was devised to reward the house with the best speakers.



*Col DS Khera being honoured at the Annual UK Secondary Schools Heads Conference (sent and selected by IPSC).*

In April 1997, Col Khera was selected by the IPSC to represent India at the Annual Secondary Schools Heads Conference held in the UK. After the conference he visited the prestigious Rugby School and Featherstone High School where forty percent of students were of Indian Origin. The PPS riders participated in the Delhi Horse Show for the first time and rubbed shoulders with riders of International repute. The participant teams comprised of teams from the Defence Forces, Police, and three international teams. The PPS Nabha was the only school team participating. The school riders impressed the elite gathering and **Bimaljeet Singh (B- 0207)** clinched the silver medal in Show Jumping. After a long gap of ten years, The PPS also organized an expedition to *Ladakhi Peak*, sandwiched between Lahaul and Kullu valleys at an altitude of 18,500 feet, in the Northern Himalayas. In January 1998, Col Khera was elected as Secretary of the Indian Public Schools' Conference at Rajkumar College, Rajkot. It was not only an acknowledgement of his high personal stature amongst the public schools' community but also the fact that The PPS was universally accepted as one of the core schools of the Conference. To add to the festive atmosphere, a large troupe of Bhangra boys from PPS participated in the Republic Day parade at New Delhi. It was a matter of pride for the PPS community and Old Nabhaites to witness the PPS boys perform live on television. It was not just the Bhangra performance that impressed the audience, but the impeccable behaviour of the students that had the organizers showering praise on them. Secretary, Ministry of Cultural Affairs, Government of India gifted a "Presentation Prize" to the Headmaster. Later in March 1998, Governor, Lt.General B.K.N.Chibber presided over a special assembly in the school and gave away prizes to the bhangra participants. He had taken

over the school at a difficult time and had steered it remarkably well, despite a heart attack in between, with his vision and foresight. He set high standards of discipline but at the same time, all students could clearly discern the affection he had for them. Col Khera commanded huge respect not only in The PPS but among the entire Public Schools community in whole of India. In 1999, Col Dr DS Khera announced his retirement, w.e.f. 26<sup>th</sup> July, from the post of Headmaster. He left an indelible mark as a strong administrator who had put the school on a strong financial footing at the time of his departure. Mr MS Bedi, his successor, saluted his dedication and untiring zeal and called him a '*living legend*'.

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## **THE FOURTH PHASE**

**(01-08-1991 to 26-07-1999)**

*(Written in consultation with Col Daya Singh Khera on my request to add to the history records of the School. First Phase was the tenure of Mr Kate, Second Phase belonged to Mr Atma Ram Gupta and Third phase to Gp. Capt AJS Grewal . -Dr Jashanjot Singh (S-52,1967))*



*Leading the Staff*

In the year 1991, the school passed through a hard time due to some unfortunate incidents. Militancy was at its peak and it was very difficult for the school administration to protect the school environment from the outside situation prevailing in the State of Punjab. The students had become aggressive and disobedient. It led to a gang fight among the students and a few students were seriously injured. The parents protested and wanted a high-power committee to go into the entire situation.



Many students were withdrawn from school as the parents felt their children were not safe and the discipline situation seemed to be beyond control. The Board of Governors took a serious view and asked the Executive Committee to go into the entire prevalent situation and suggest remedial actions so that the school could be put back on the rails. Before the Committee could start its inquiry, the Headmaster, Gp. Capt. AJS Grewal, honourably resigned. The Bursar had already refused another extension due to his personal reasons. Senior members of the faculty took retirement and some of the junior members who could not adjust to the existing situation were asked to leave.

The depleted student strength affected the school finances and there was a shortfall of Rs 14 lacs in the school budget. There was need of a Headmaster at the helm who could lead the school out of the rough seas and return it to its past glory. The Board of Governors selected Col (Dr) Daya Singh Khera for the job. He was highly qualified, with a postgraduate in Geography and Education, Ph. D in Education and a Diploma in Physical Education. As a commissioned officer in the Army Education Corps, he was closely associated with education of children. He had the experience of running a residential school as he was Headmaster of Sainik School, Nagrota (J&K) as a Major from 1970 to 1974 and a Principal of Sainik School, Rewa (MP) from 1983 to 1988. Prior to joining the Indian Army, he had served as a lecturer in Govt. College Ajmer and Lohia College, Churu in Rajasthan.

Initially posted as Bursar, he was to be elevated as Headmaster after the retirement of the officiating HM, Mr. GS Punia, that was just about a month away. As Bursar, Col DS Khera had time to understand the functioning of the school. Mr Punia retired on 31 July, 1991 from The Punjab Public School, after serving for thirty years as Bursar and twice as officiating Headmaster for short periods. Col DS Khera was then made Headmaster from 1st Aug 1991.

The Board of Governors gave the new Headmaster a free hand to work out the strategy by which the students' strength was to be made up in the next session, staff morale was to be built with personal examples and parents' confidence was to be re-established, within the constraints of the fee structure of the school. These challenges mounted great physical and mental pressure on the new Headmaster for which he was quite well equipped. With his excellent vision and foresight, he steered the school remarkably well. Regardless of the fact that he suffered a heart attack in the very first year of his tenure, because of the stresses involved, he strived relentlessly to bring the school back to its earlier glory.



*With Dean Marshall Goodman of University of Wisconsin, USA and facilitator Darshan Dhaliwal(S-5). The University offered concessional fee for admission to The PPS students. The first batch of four left in Col Khera's tenure.*

The onset of the new era became apparent with the session of April 1992 itself. The school strength was oversubscribed because the parents developed full confidence in the new administrative set up. Col J.S. Maan, who joined as Bursar, proved to be equally hard working and honest. The fruits of the teamwork soon became visible and things started moving in the right direction. With strict economy and cutting down of wasteful expenditure, the financial situation of the school improved. To improve the academic standards, the existing system was completely reviewed and analysed and the entire academic routine of students was revised. Priorities were drawn to improve the academic standards along with developing the all-round personality of the students. *To encourage students to develop self- confidence as well as the skill of public speaking students were asked to speak in the morning assembly on burning topics.* The supervised evening preps, which had been dormant for a long time, were restarted in real earnest. Regular weekly test of two subjects was introduced. This *not only improved the academic performance of the students but also kept the students engaged and occupied on Sundays and solved discipline problems as well.* Systematic supervision and motivational talks, especially for senior students, helped the students to achieve high degree of excellence. This was evident from the cent percent results in one year, a feat that had been achieved after a long gap of 16 years. As per the basic concept the school was started as a residential institution for boys only. The social and economic changes in the society had compelled the school administration to review its decision in earlier years. *The doors of the school had been opened not only for girls as*



*day scholars but for boys as well. This decision was a major factor in lowering the standards of discipline in both the staff and the students. The Board, on the advice of Col DS Khera, took a bold step to scrap the system of day scholars for the boys from April 1992. Due to militancy and security reasons it was a problem to get a V I P for the Annual Function and Annual Sports Day. The Chairman of the Board of Governors asked his Adviser Shri Sada Nand, IAS, to preside over the Founders Day function and Lt. Gen. Gurbachan Singh PVSM, Presiding Officer of the Executive Committee was requested to be the Chief Guest at the Variety Entertainment Programme and Athletic Meet. In his first address as the Headmaster at the Founders' Day, Col Khera stressed on the need of maintaining proper discipline in the school and highlighted the strength and challenges for the school in the same vein. Earlier there had been no specific rules and regulations for purchases made by the school. The Enquiry Committee had recommended that the accounting and audit system should not be as per the company system of accounting. It should be according to the Punjab Governments rules and the audit should be conducted by the team appointed by the Auditor General of Punjab Government. The new audit system, put in place by Col. Khera, streamlined the purchase procedure and laid down clear-cut boundaries for the sanction powers. The Headmaster, Col. DS Khera worked hard to prepare detailed draft procedures for service documents, leave records, salary, increments, annual confidential reports, and proper documentation for items purchased and expended. The Executive Committee chaired by Lt Gen Gurbachan Singh, PVSM became very effective and vigilant. Extra pains were taken by S Kamal Nain Singh, Secretary to Governor, to solve the problems of the school. Shri S K Sinha, Commissioner of Patiala Division, was very supportive and cooperative. He ensured that the school had all the help from the civil administration. The local Brigade Commander who was a co-opted member of the Executive Committee, always made available Army resources to motivate the students to join the Armed Forces. It was a challenge for the new headmaster to win the confidence of the parents whose wards were put under the care of the school. Confidence building movement was started by developing personal contacts with each parent. Parents were requested to visit the school and meet the Headmaster and staff members to have first-hand information regarding the progress of their children. Once a month, an open forum was organised, where parents were encouraged to discuss various problems of the children and give suggestion to solve these in an amicable way. This inter and intra relationship building proved very successful and made the parents part of the school organisation. On the discipline side the students were to be trained into acceptable norms of the school. The student leaders (Prefects) were groomed to share the responsibilities, and be role models in front of the juniors, so that they could command respect rather than attract hatred. The members of the staff were asked to monitor the behaviour and discuss with the Headmaster, the strength and weakness of each child. The teachers were assigned*

*the duty to know the child, meaning that they should remember the names of the child, father's name, place to which child belonged, if possible, the profession of the parents etc. This developed a very strong bonding among the staff and the students and the discipline problems were minimized.* The members of the faculty also required motivation and involvement in the school administration so that they could take up responsible positions in other institutions. Beside attractive remuneration, mental satisfaction was very important. The staff room gossips were expected to change into positive thinking and fruitful discussions rather than criticising the administration. All the members were given the responsibility as per the experience and aptitude. *The class IV employees who were always up in arms and did not follow the normal norms of service, were made to understand that the school loss or damage to the property was their personal loss, because priority of allocation of funds in the budget was to be given to make up the loss, rather than increase the salary and allowances. They became aware of the consequences and stopped unnecessary agitations.*

Weaker sex had always been getting a biased treatment from the male dominated society especially in Punjab. *It was a progressive step by the Headmaster, Col Khera, to open the gates of The Punjab Public School to the girls.* It was felt that there was dire need for a Girls' Hostel so that girls from rural areas could take advantage of a Public-School education. In 1993, Col DS Khera floated the proposal to start a girls' hostel from the next session. The board of governors had its reservations but he assured the B O G that it would have no adverse effect. Many parents were keen to send their daughters to school, especially those whose sons were already studying in the school. The parents appreciated the decision which allowed the hostel to start from the next session on experimental basis without making any alterations in the existing buildings.

***The girls' hostel started from 1994 and has proved to be a very successful venture of the school! And a great step forward in the progress of the School.***



*The new class rooms behind Junior School. The old classrooms in main building became girls' Hostel.*

The buildings of the entire school were getting old, especially the Junior Wing, Middle House and the Main School building. Major repairs, involving huge expenditures, were required. However, school budget could not allow these due to meagre revenue.

*The Punjab Government failed to meet its commitment. The only alternative was to exercise strict economy not at the cost of efficiency but by checking wasteful expenditure on manpower, food, water, transport, telephone, stationery, electricity etc. With the cooperation of the staff and good leadership at the top, middle level school became surplus in funds which were available not only for repair but for new construction such as Dining Hall in the Junior School, overhead water tanks in the Junior as well as in Senior School and parents' Guest House. By the time the Headmaster retired, the school had four crores in the school kitty as reserve fund, earning about forty lacs as interest, which could meet the requirements of future expansion.*





*The Foundation stone of an indoor gymnasium was laid next to Auditorium by Mr Jan Leschaly , CEO of Glaxo Smith Kline Beecham Plc. or Horlicks. This was later shifted to Sham Bagh and a bigger gymnasium was built, during tenure of next Headmaster, after putting in extra money.*

At the International level, the school children had the opportunities to visit Japan, Dubai and United Kingdom. The Headmaster himself had the chance to attend Educational Conferences at Torquay (UK) and Ukraine. It was a unique honour for the school and the country when Col DS Khera was invited to speak at an international platform on the “Role of a Leader in Education”. He addressed the august audience consisting of Principals, Educational Advisors, Educational Counsellors and Politicians from 140 countries. The Conference was organised by the International Confederation of Principals from 4<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> May 1999, at Helsinki (Finland).



*At the Helsinki Conference of heads of schools of 140 countries.*

Col DS Khera was closely associated with Indian Public Schools Conference since 1973 when he attended first meeting of IPCS in Lovedale. He was member of the Executive Committee of IPSC for three tenures. He was elevated as the Secretary of the IPSC at Rajkumar College, Rajkot (Gujrat). He organised 59<sup>th</sup> Annual Session of Indian Public Schools Conference from 3<sup>rd</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> Jan 1999, after a gap of 33 years in The PPS. The theme of the conference was "Special Education". The Governor of Punjab and Chairman, Board of Governors Shri B.K.N.Chibber PVSM, AVSM, VSM presided over the inaugural function.



*The formal ceremony of the IPSC Conference shows H.E The Governor of Punjab Gen BKN Chhiber, Mrs GD Bakshi, Gen GS Brar, Raja Narinder Singh and Col DS Khera.*

Col Khera announced his retirement from the post of Headmaster after the summer vacation in 1999 as he did not want extension of two years. He had taken over the school at a difficult time when the entire environment was very volatile and aggressive. *The situation had become so alarming that the school employees had refused to help in the unloading of his luggage from the truck, when he had joined.*

With his resilience, hard work and personal example he could set high standards. He had clear vision about discipline norms. *He was strict but at the same time each and every student could clearly feel the affection he had for them at heart.* Every decision and action of his was in the interest of the school and the students. Col Khera commanded huge respect not only in The PPS but among the entire Public Schools community in India. He left his mark as a strong administrator and had put the school on sound financial footing at the time of his departure.

Also, to his credit was the diplomatic handling of agitation started by the class IV employees that could have turned nasty on many occasions.

*He could pacify the agitated local population and solve the Temple land problem just before he left the school.* A grand dinner was organised to bid farewell to Col Dr DS Khera. The new Headmaster, Mr. M S Bedi, saluted his dedication and untiring zeal, and called him a “Living Legend”. Lt Gen G S Brar presented him a memento to express his gratitude on behalf of Board of Governors.

Thus, came to an end the glorious era of a Headmaster in the history of The PPS. The Headmaster, who brought out safely the ship of The PPS from troubled waters.