

**Transcription: BV022.29.3**

**Interview with Sadhu Binning**

**Audio Recording: 2022\_0029\_0003\_004.mp3**

**Interviewers: INTVWR1: Anushay Malik; INTVWR2: Kate Petrusa**

**Interviewee: SB: Sadhu Binning**

1 INTVWR1: Okay, hello. This is an interview of Sadhu Binning who is here in the room with Kate and  
2 Anushay. It is the 25<sup>th</sup> of November, Friday. Sadhuji, if you could begin by introducing yourself, please.

3 SB: Okay, my name is Sadhu Binning, and I'm a Burnaby resident. I've been here since 1973, in this beautiful  
4 city, and both my kids were born in this city, and so I've been a long-time resident of Burnaby.

5 INTVWR1: Excellent. I just wanted to tell you a little bit about the exhibit, which we have spoken about  
6 before, but just in a little more detail. The exhibit is on South Asian history, specifically focusing within  
7 Burnaby, if you go up in the Burnaby Village Museum. It's a temporary exhibit, so it goes up in May 2023  
8 and then there may be changes that are possible a year later, so it will be up for a total of two years, but  
9 these interviews could also be used by researchers, by the city also, to add more about South Asian  
10 immigrants in the Village Museum overall, including a permanent exhibit that's going up later, which is  
11 going to be focusing on a [sonkam], like a cookhouse. So that's the background, do you have any questions  
12 about this before we go on?

13 SB: Not really.

14 INTVWR1: We wanted to start off with your family history. So, who was the first person to migrate, when  
15 did they come... we found from the interviews that your Uncle Dhana Singh was one of the first, so can you  
16 begin with his story?

17 SB: Sure. My uncle, Dhana Singh. He didn't use his last name at the time, so just 'Dhana Singh', but people  
18 identified each other by their village name, so he used his village name, [Jayul]. He came here in 1931 and  
19 so he worked in the forest industry. At that time, you know, just two places that you could work, mainly, the  
20 forest industry or the agricultural sector. So he did work in the forestry. He and another partner owned a  
21 sawmill, [shorts], small sawmills in the sort of bush area, and all over the place. Sometimes around  
22 Kamloops, in B.C. Sometimes he worked at Williams Lake and Quesnel, in that sort of part, and also on  
23 Vancouver Island. So it was a small sort of mill that they would build and do some logging there  
24 themselves, and so whenever they need to they move off. So yeah, he was here... in the beginning he came  
25 as... he was an 'illegal', as things were, so he took a few years, I think it was 1938 that he became a  
26 permanent resident, with a number of other people, I think three hundred fifty or so mainly young people,  
27 young Punjabis who were here over the years and so at that time, I think it's 1938, that people in the  
28 community gathered some resources and hired a lawyer, and they went to Ottawa, and Dr. [Fahrni] I think  
29 was involved at that time and so he was... so he became a Canadian at that time. One of the other people in  
30 that group was a fellow by the name of Darshan Singh

31 INTVWR1: Mm.

32 SB: He was a trade unionist, he became quite a well-known organizer here in B.C.

33 INTVWR1: Mm.

34 SB: And the IWA that was formed, and also he was a member of the Communist party for B.C.

35 INTVWR1: Mm.

36 SB: And eventually he became sort of quite prominent in the party, although the history hasn't given him  
37 that recognition. But he was. There are some pictures that you can see where he's standing with the big  
38 leadership and, [-] and he... and I think there was a big strike in 1943 by the IWA that changed a lot of

39 things and he was quite involved in that and then he also spent some time up in Alberta, there were some  
40 people from the community working there, so he was quite, you know... and my uncle, although himself  
41 was not really involved in the trade union movement, but he was, they were, close friends and did help each  
42 other. [Dashun] Singh went back to India in 1947 and, you know, just to be part of the Indian Revolution.  
43 That's what he wanted to do. And so my uncle went back in 1951 after twenty years, for the first time, and I  
44 was about four years old at the time, and I remember a few things about when he came to the village. So he  
45 stayed there about five or six years – I think six years – and during those years [Dashun] Singh [-], who was  
46 very active in the communist movement there, would come to our home and they would have their  
47 underground [organization], all kinds of books, and printing material and all that. I remember playing with  
48 some of the paper clips and stuff like that when I was five, six years old. And so my uncle came in 1931,  
49 and then went back and married, and came back in 1957, and I think his family, my aunt and two... his kids  
50 – three kids, actually – two daughters and one boy, and they came with him, also... after him, with my aunt,  
51 [-], we call in Punjabi. And so... and my father followed him. My father came here in 1960 and started  
52 working in the sawmills, mainly and he was here...he worked on Vancouver Island, Duncan, Lake Compton  
53 and that area and also [tape ends, beginning of tape two] I will [--] then.

54 INTVWR2: I'm sorry about that. The card was full and I thought, "Oh, I'll be right back because I have a  
55 million extras and they're all 128 gigs. I don't know if this is just old. I didn't like any of them. I put three  
56 different ones in and it's like "no data", "no data" so I had to erase, I had to delete, so it took me a little  
57 longer but I'm glad you hadn't forgotten the [-]

58 INTVWR1: Yeah, we were just chatting, but we'll continue the interview where we were. I wanted to start  
59 off, re-start again, partially at the point where we left off, which is to ask, you were talking about how your  
60 family and friends helped the migrants come over in the specific context of your uncle, so if you could  
61 explain that to us.

62 SB: When my uncle came here in 1931, he did have some relatives. His cousins were living in the Lower  
63 Mainland, in the Haney area. They had a farm. His cousin's name was [Tarkar Singh Bains] and he had a  
64 big family. And so they helped him get off the ship or the boat at the time, and then, I guess, like other  
65 people of the time, and they... he didn't show up to go back whenever he was supposed to. And so he  
66 stayed, hidden away until 1938 when he was [freed] with a number of other people with the help of the  
67 community, [-- -- ---], and the group that he was in, 350 people or so... was also a fellow by the name of  
68 [Dashun] Singh Sangha, later on known, back in Punjab, was known as a Canadian. "[Dashun] Singh,  
69 Canadian". And so they would work in the mills and also became good friends. [Dashun] Singh had come  
70 here as a student at UBC. That's how he was let in, but while at UBC he got involved with left politics. He  
71 became a member of the Communist Party. That led him to the trade union movement. In that movement the  
72 majority of the people worked in the forest industry, from the community. So he ended up with the IWA at  
73 that time, and organizing, and there were all kinds of issues that the employers used, dividing the workforce,  
74 and racism was there, so the Indians and the Chinese were paid less and they weren't allowed in the unions  
75 as well. And so they would use them as strike breakers whenever the workers tried to [-] there. And so these  
76 issues were part of the racism at that time even within the labour force. So [Dashun] Singh Canadian was  
77 instrumental in changing some of this, these things. And he brought in a number of... most of the people  
78 who worked in the sawmills, in the lumber industry, in the union, of... not just from the South Asian, or  
79 the...at that time, "Hindoos", they were called, all of them, and also from the Chinese community as well.  
80 So he did do that and became quite prominent in the labour movement here. He himself, although he didn't  
81 finish any of his degrees at UBC, but he did write a book in 1943, in English, called "The [Price] of New  
82 Asia" as it was called. And so he was quite well-educated and helped organize the community, and the other  
83 role that he played was with the right to vote movement. Before he got involved with it the community the  
84 right was taken away in March 1907 by the British Columbia government. This was where most of the  
85 Indians lived, and so it...but you could go to the next province, Alberta, and vote. But not in B.C. And first

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86 they took it from the provincial level, and then at the municipal level as well, later on. So he was  
87 instrumental in getting that, although not everybody gives him that credit. But it is the trade union  
88 movement, when it came and stood behind the community for this right that made the difference. And it was  
89 through him that the trade union, especially the forest industry, and the mining on Vancouver Island -- there  
90 were very strong trade unions there, as well-- so those came behind the community's demand for the right to  
91 vote.

92 INTVWR1: And, Sadhuji, can we also hear about how your uncle was connected to this? Because you  
93 mentioned when he first came he moved to Vancouver.

94 SB: Right.

95 INTVWR1: And the second time Kamloops.

96 SB: Yes.

97 INTVWR1: So can we trace his story a little bit? Because we want to find how we get to Burnaby.

98 SB: Oh, I see. Okay.

99 INTVWR1: So he comes first to Vancouver, and then what work does he... does do and does he get to  
100 know the rest of the community and be involved in these movements while he's in Vancouver or does that  
101 happen afterward?

102 SB: No, no. I think he...as I mentioned before, he sort of moved around. They all did. Wherever the work  
103 was. Some people worked in the farms. They stayed in the Lower Mainland because that's where most of  
104 the farms were. But people who worked in the sawmills or in the logging industry, in the forestry, they  
105 would move around wherever the work was. And there could be any number of reasons that you would have  
106 to. Sometimes you had fires, like a mill would shut down, leave the small locations, and so they would sort  
107 of move around in the province. So he, I think, as far as I know, he worked in the Lower Mainland as well in  
108 some of the mills here but also in Kamloops and in Quesnel area, Williams Lake and also towards...on  
109 Vancouver Island as well.

110 INTVWR1: Okay.

111 SB: So, you know, they would sort of go wherever the work was.

112 INTVWR1: Okay. And was most of the community at that point in time, that your uncle knew, living close  
113 by him, in Vancouver?

114 SB: The family lived here that helped him.

115 INTVWR1: Okay.

116 SB: His cousins. INTVWR1: Yeah.

117 SB: And because they owned a farm.

118 INTVWR1: Ah, okay.

119 SB: So, you know, they owned a farm that mostly...they sold milk, I think. You know, cows. But he himself,  
120 he was... known him through other people. Quite likeable. Like, you drink and chat and, you know, make  
121 jokes and so even now the people that used to know him in the last few years, that I've met, they always  
122 talked about him, "Oh [Tana Singh], he was a fun guy." That sort of thing. So he made a lot of friends. And  
123 at the same time, some of his friends, because these were tough times, a lot of times, you had to fight,  
124 physically. And so he also became a bit of a wrestler himself and had a number of friends who were  
125 wrestlers. I worked with one fellow in the post office in the early 70s, he used to wrestle with my uncle, he  
126 told me. This is a white fellow. I forgot his name, though. But he also used to tell me some stories, "Oh  
127 these guys are fun fellows, they used to wrestle and fight", and all that. So those are the kinds of things that  
128 he was involved in...young man, and I've seen a couple of pictures with women, and very... I think mainly  
129 this fellow who lived in Kamloops after...when he came back with [-], he sort of owned the sawmill  
130 operations, small ones, with him, partner, and his family still lives in Kamloops.

131 INTVWR1: Sorry if you've mentioned it already, but the name of the friend?

132 SB: [Nijun] Singh...last name...it'll come to me, I knew him quite well even after my uncle passed away.

133 INTVWR1: So if the second time he came to Kamloops...I have another question about luggage in just a  
134 minute...

135 SB: Sure.

136 INTVWR1: But if he came to Kamloops the second time, then what brought him to Vancouver after that?

137 SB: I just say, again... the mill that they had wasn't really doing that well.

138 INTVWR1: Okay.

139 SB: With [-], [-] he was called. And so, I think, in search of a job and also because he had kids now, right?

140 INTVWR1: Ah.

141 SB: His family arrived towards...in...I think, two years after he did. I'm mixing up dates. I think my aunt  
142 and his three...her three kids and my brother...four, five of them, came in 'fifty-nine.

143 INTVWR1: Okay.

144 SB: And my father came in 'sixty. So they came to Kamloops, that's where he was living, and they had a  
145 home there. My uncle had a home. I don't know whether he had bought that home when he went to India in  
146 1951, or bought it when he came back. That I don't know. But they had a home and so they lived in  
147 Kamloops for a while, and then they moved to Vancouver and bought this house on Gladstone Street which  
148 is still in the family for my relatives there. And the brother. So, yeah, I think it was the search of job... and  
149 in his later years, when we came, he wasn't working in the sawmill. My father was. He had given up the  
150 lumber industry and started working in the farm, in the agriculture sector. He... I think he was one of the  
151 first people who would take labour, labour from Vancouver to the farm. And this is... and a lot of people  
152 that are my age now and came in between '60...between '70 and '72, those two years, people, young people  
153 came in large numbers, of visitors, I guess. You could come... they changed some laws in '68, that you  
154 could come as a visitor and if you liked the country you can decide to stay. And if you qualified... the  
155 numbers system that they had, then you could get immigration. And so a large number of young Punjabis  
156 came, and many of these were educated or were in colleges or universities, had B.A.s and Master's, and so

157 these people were also... this is... we were talking about the late sixties and early seventies. They were also  
158 politically conscious and active. Many of these, you know, you had this huge movement in India called [N-  
159 ism], started in the Bengal, [n---], and some of these people were very politically active even before they  
160 came here. So they became quite active here as well because there was racism. You know a large number of  
161 people came, there was reaction from the larger community, and so they had to fight and survive. And the  
162 other thing that happened at that time was that before that people only lived in B.C. People from India. Few  
163 lived and worked in Alberta in some sort of mills there, but the majority lived here. But when they came in  
164 the seventies, early seventies, either they came directly to these other centreSB: Toronto and Montreal, even  
165 Calgary, Edmonton, or they moved there after coming to Vancouver. So you have a community starting in  
166 all these centres as well. Well, before that, it was just Vancouver was the main Canadian centre. So these  
167 people faced racism everywhere, so they organized themselves almost immediately because they were  
168 conscious, politically conscious, and they knew their stuff, they could...English, they knew, and being  
169 members of an independent country, India, they didn't have the same kind of problems as did people when  
170 they came... early part of that century, last century, because India was a slave country at the time,  
171 colonial... colony of the British Empire, and so these people—

172 INTVWR1: Sorry, could I ask you to expand on this? I want to hear the sentiment: why they would be,  
173 when they're members of what you refer to as a slave country they wouldn't do the same things that they did  
174 later?

175 SB: Well, at least... a lot of these people came, that early part... were ex-soldiers of the British army and  
176 they were trained by the British, they fought for the British in other parts of the world, right? In First World  
177 War. Even before that they were used as policemen in Shanghai, and Hong Kong...

178 INTVWR1: Yes.

179 SB: ...And... you know. And so they had a different mentality. Right away, they weren't asking for  
180 independence. It was when they came here, they learned a lot of things, and the racism that they faced, and  
181 that's when they formed this [G---r] Party in 1913. Most of the activity at that time was in Vancouver. But  
182 because Canada was a colony as India was, so British had direct control here. So they could control things  
183 here. So the people went across the border and the [G—r] Party was formed in Astoria, Oregon, which is not  
184 too far from Vancouver, right? You know, Washington, and then Oregon is just the border of [--] and  
185 Oregon State. So that's where the the [G—r] Party was formed. And the reason was that a lot of people were  
186 actually from Vancouver, or this area, they had [---] but they couldn't do those things here because the  
187 British had direct control. So that's the reason that they did there.

188 INTVWR1: Thank you for that. I just want to backtrack a little bit. When you said, "tough times". Can you  
189 explain what you meant by "these were tough times" when you said that you and your friends were wrestlers  
190 and you...

191 SB: Oh.

192 INTVWR1: ...had to fight...

193 SB: [laughs]

194 INTVWR1: Are you a [--]? Is it similar to [Palawani] culture?

195 SB: Yes.

196 INTVWR1: Was that where it's first developed?

197 SB: Yeah, yeah. We...

198 INTVWR1: So can you explain what that means?

199 SB: Well, I think the Punjabis, one of the sports that they've always liked, as far as I can remember, is  
200 wrestling.

201 INTVWR1: Yeah.

202 SB: And this is an Indian-style wrestling, a bit different than what we see here. You don't hit each other but  
203 just simply try to put a person on the ground on his back. And so that was the wrestling. And, you know,  
204 everybody did that. And later on, the other sport that became quite popular among Punjabis is called  
205 [kabaddi]. And that's also, they explain, in a way, that [kabaddi] is the kind of sport that you go into the  
206 enemy territory, start trouble there, and then come back. And that's [kabaddi]. [Kabaddi] is. You have two  
207 teams, and there's a dividing line, and one person from this team goes to the other side and then, you know,  
208 just tries to touch one person, and they can all catch him, there are two different types of [b--i], or just create  
209 trouble there and then come back. If you can make it back to your side, you got a point. So that's the game.  
210 But the wrestling was very popular among Punjabis. Always has been. And so people even in the army also  
211 wrestled. You know, they... who were... Because this is one way to show how strong you are. And at the  
212 individual level. And so when people came here, one way or the other they had to do physical labour and  
213 also had to fight, with, you know... there's stories like... I think there's one story that I heard many times,  
214 there was this guy, the racists were bothering him, and they were a number of people, and he said, "One  
215 with one, anyone!", he said "Come one with one, any one of you!" Because he didn't know much English.  
216 So that's how they survived. So my uncle was also... became a wrestler, working in the sawmills and with  
217 other people, and a number of his other friends were also wrestlers, and so... I knew at least two brothers,  
218 one's name was [Assa Singh], [Tandi] was his last name, and he was a good wrestler, his son lives just  
219 across the Fraser River, there, from Burnaby, have a home there. And so my uncle was a wrestler, and I  
220 once worked with a fellow in the post office in the early seventies who used to wrestle with my uncle, and  
221 he said, "Yeah, I knew [Tana] Singh. So we worked together in the post office on Fraser Street, there, Fraser  
222 and 43<sup>rd</sup>, about twelve or thirteen years. And so, yeah, he was a wrestler, and as the story is from other  
223 people, that he was quite likeable to all.

224 INTVWR1: If we could now connect to what, if you have any information about what, your uncle brought  
225 with him in his suitcase, and if not, then what your father brought, what you brought.

226 SB: In the beginning I think people, when they came, what I know, that they would always have a bistra, the  
227 rajayi, and some piece of cloth that they could lie on, on top and—

228 INTVWR1: Can you explain 'rajayi' and 'bistra' for the recording?

229 SB: Right. Rajayi is usually with cotton in it for warmth, and even in India people use that because in the...  
230 at night they would sleep outside in most cases, and—

231 INTVWR1: It's a blanket, basically.

232 SB: A blanket, yeah. But with cotton inside. Sort of a blanket on both sides and the cotton [-] are sewed  
233 together. And every person would have that. That was something that they carried even when they went  
234 for...on their religious journeys in Punjab or in India anywhere. So they would have a bistra and I think

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235 some people would carry a small attaché case, or trunk, it was called. Trunk. But not all... everybody did  
236 have that, I think. But I don't know what my uncle had when he came in 1931, but when my father came in  
237 '60 he had the bistra, the rajayi, and a couple of sheets and also a small attaché or trunk, that he brought with  
238 him.[a phone rings] Oops, excuse me.

239 INTVWR1: No worries.

240 INTVWR2: I'm glad it's not us.

241 INTVWR1: [laughs] Everyone's spoken about the rajayi and you know, it makes me think.

242 INTVWR2: Yeah.

243 INTVWR1: It's something my parents still say to me: "You're not taking any...? Shouldn't you take a quilt,  
244 like something?"

245 INTVWR2: Right. Wow.

246 INTVWR1: I think, "Now, you get them everywhere, mama."

247 INTVWR2: Yeah.

248 INTVWR1: But it's a thing.

249 INTVWR2: Wow.

250 INTVWR1: Can you explain to us how it's made? Because someone told us in the last interview that we did  
251 that the women had sat together and made it and had a technique for making it.

252 SB: It was women who did that work.

253 INTVWR1: Okay.

254 SB: No men. Especially in Punjabi. The Indians, when we are talking about Indian society, it's the caste  
255 divisions, and people in different castes did different things. And you would have a caste that actually did  
256 the sewing. And I also... a caste that used... I think there were different castes. One that actually made the  
257 clothes from the cotton. It was all done...it's... in a village, you would have everything there. The cotton,  
258 and the people who worked with the cottons and people who would weave the clothes. And then one caste  
259 who would sew them, or whatever the needs are. And so mainly... but in a household it would be the  
260 women work, not men. Although when they went into the army, they did most of their things in the army.  
261 But in the home, they will not.

262 INTVWR1: Yeah.

263 SB: And that seems to still carry onward.

264 INTVWR1: Yes, true.

265 INTVWR2: Small question, but you said the attaché case, kind of like a little... almost like a briefcase size?  
266 Or was it something more? Because we have a lot of in our collection... we have trunks.

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267 SB: Trunks, yeah.

268 INTVWR2: Or they're kind of a... quite big...almost like a chest...

269 SB: I think they're probably all sizes.

270 INTVWR2: Okay.

271 SB: Depending on the person or the family, or whatever they could find.

272 INTVWR2: Yeah, whatever. Okay.

273 SB: There wasn't anything standard, that this is...

274 INTVWR2: No. True.

275 SB: I don't think there was.

276 INTVWR2: In general, though... I'm trying to think of what we have that might work.

277 INTVWR1: Yeah. Sure.

278 SB: Sure.

279 INTVWR2: As just a... to get a sense of the size.

280 INTVWR1: Yeah.

281 SB: Yeah.

282 INTVWR2: So it was all over the place.

283 SB: All over the place. Yeah.

284 INTVWR2: Okay.

285 SB: Anything could work. INTVWR2: Good

286 INTVWR1: Okay. And if we move from here to your own personal story, and then how you managed to  
287 come to Burnaby.

288 SB: Okay.

289 INTVWR1: If we trace that backwards... so you mentioned first that you stayed at your uncle's house when  
290 you came?

291 SB: Right. Right.

292 INTVWR1: And then your father bought his own...



293 SB: Right

294 INTVWR1: ...house eventually, so where...

295 SB: No... my father...

296 INTVWR1: ... did he buy it?

297 SB: My father had a home. Right from 1967, when we came, right?

298 INTVWR1: Ah, okay.

299 SB: And my father had a home, he bought a home, three years before that on Victoria Drive and 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue  
300 there, in Vancouver, but he was working out in... I think either... by Hundred Mile House or on Vancouver  
301 Island, I think Lake Compton or someplace. So he would come to Vancouver on holidays or weekends,  
302 whenever... then he would stay with my uncle.

303 INTVWR1: Ah.

304 SB: In his house on Kaslo Street. So when we came... I think he was still working, my father was still  
305 working in one of the mills, but he didn't work there too long when we came. So he wasn't... had some  
306 health problems, and then he started working in the farms with my uncle, who would take the labourer, in  
307 early, late 60s and early 70s. So after that he didn't work in the sawmills, my father. So he was at the time...  
308 was working someplace but also he would come in and stay with my uncle when we came. So we... myself,  
309 my mother and my younger brother... the three of us came together. We stayed with my uncle in his home  
310 in Vancouver, for a few weeks, I think, and then we moved into the house that my father had on Victoria  
311 Drive, there, and it wasn't too far from my uncle's home. They were quite close. And so...

312 INTVWR1: Sorry, can you explain this to us? So if the Victoria Drive house was close to your uncle's, but  
313 your father was working on the Island...?

314 SB: For a while, when we came. After that, I think he may have gone for... once or twice to work there. He  
315 didn't really work. He was either on sick leave or compensation or something, or... As I remember, after we  
316 came he didn't really go out to work that much.

317 INTVWR1: Ah, okay. So was the house for you guys? What was the appeal of Vancouver, is what I'm  
318 trying to get at, instead of being close to where he lived?

319 SB: Well, I think the same thing as my uncle, with... you know we talked about why he moved from  
320 Kamloops to Vancouver, was, One: in search of jobs, because Kamloops was a small place, there was only a  
321 few jobs available there. And also, with the family now he wanted to be in Vancouver so the kids could go  
322 to school.

323 INTVWR1: Ah, okay.

324 SB: And that was the main reason for them to come to Vancouver. And my father, also... he knew that we  
325 were coming, and so he bought a home for us to live in and... which we did. But I think we lived in that  
326 house for two years or so and then bought a home on 13<sup>th</sup> and Clark in Vancouver, and that's where we lived  
327 for a few years. And then I got married in 1973 and bought a home in Vancouver, just north, about four, five  
328 blocks away from the 13<sup>th</sup> Avenue home that we had, on Knight Street, of Clark, there. And... but same year

329 we sold that house in Vancouver and bought a house in Burnaby. In 1973.

330 INTVWR1: [inaudible]

331 SB: Yeah. I think it was later in the year that we bought the house.

332 INTVWR1: Can we hear a little bit more about this decision? To sell that house and buy the Burnaby home?

333 SB: I think it was basically my wife's family, who was living in Burnaby. They actually [--]... When my  
334 wife came, they also came in, her family came in 'sixty-seven, the same year that we did, a few months  
335 earlier than us, and they were living in North Vancouver. They had their relatives in North Vancouver. They  
336 still live in North Vancouver. And so they had a house in Burnaby, and so she wanted to be close to her  
337 family. I guess I didn't care that much. You know, I was in a different sort of mode, which I suffered after,  
338 to this day, because... I, being a reader, I've read a lot of books and became a 'rational', which is not a  
339 smart thing to do in the community when [--] you're thinking in those terms. I thought things rationally.  
340 Look, I'm married now, there are all these problems in the family, I'm going to live separately. Not too  
341 many people did that and my family didn't like it, right? And they were thinking in their own ways and I  
342 was thinking on my own ways. And so we moved into a home in Vancouver which I had bought earlier.  
343 And then... I didn't really care that much, but my wife wanted to be in Burnaby and close to her family, and  
344 so we moved to Burnaby. In 1973. Bought a home on Irmin Street, by Royal Oak. I... not 'Vermin'. Yeah.  
345 There was at that time a middle school there, I think Burnaby South, it was called. Or McPherson School.  
346 And then later they built the now Burnaby South Secondary School there at that... sort of around there. But  
347 that's where we lived from 1973 'til 1987. Both my kids were born in that home on Irmin Street. There were  
348 some shops nearby on Royal Oak and Rumble, a drugstore... Later on, now, we have a gas station there  
349 where there used to be a drugstore there, and some shops there... a barbershop, a sort of a bike repair  
350 shop... you know, those kinds of things. And my kids used to... and other kids from the neighborhood, used  
351 to play there, ride their bikes. And so these people that I still remember were very helpful, very nice people.  
352 A couple of times, you know, the kids, they would hurt themselves, so they would bring them home. So  
353 those were the kinds of times that you could... left kids out and play on their own for the whole day. And  
354 that's how my kids, in the beginning... they would go out and come back after two hours, we didn't maybe  
355 worry that much in Burnaby. So it was a nice place, quiet place, although a lot of racism... the neighbors,  
356 some were good, and mostly not good. We had all kinds of problems, issues, with neighbors...

357 INTVWR1: Is there any story that you would be willing to share with us, if you remember anything? You  
358 don't have to if you don't want to.

359 SB: Yeah, well, the neighbors that lived right next door were quite racist. The whole family. And they had a  
360 young boy who had friends. And I remember one time I was doing some work outside my home, either  
361 cutting... I cut grass, or do something. And they came with their friends and they start, "[f-] Hindus" and  
362 this and that. And I am not a fighting kind of guy, but I got mad and so I picked up something, and they had  
363 just parked their car... there were four of five of them in that... either van or car... just... they just pulled  
364 into their home and I took something in my hand, I don't know what it was... some... wood or stick, [-]  
365 something. But angry. In a real bad mood. So I went there and I hit whatever it was and I said, "Get out  
366 now!", so they all took off. Never bothered me after that. And they moved out quite soon after that. And  
367 then we had the new neighbors who were Italians. Very nice family, and my kids grew up with their kids.  
368 But the early, the first neighbors there, were real problems. And I had that problem when we moved to this  
369 other place where we live now. I wrote a poem about it. I don't know if you had a chance to look at my  
370 poetry...

371 INTVWR1: I haven't actually seen that poem. But you wrote a poem about this incident?

372 SB: Not this one, but the other one. Yeah, both, you could call it. But about the neighbor. The poem is called  
373 "Neighbor".

374 INTVWR1: Is it in Punjabi?

375 SB: It's in Punjabi and English. I published a bilingual poetry collection back in 1994 called "No More  
376 Watno Dur".

377 INTVWR1: Ah, "No More Watno Dur".

378 SB: 'Watan' is a country and everybody... prefer living in Canada when I came, that we were living in 'Watno  
379 Dur'. 'Watan' is there, like the country is there, and this is far away from the country, from the motherland.  
380 And so I was the editor of the magazine.

381 INTVWR1: Yes.

382 SB: Called 'Watno Dur'.

383 INTVWR1: This is the question that we have, actually, about it. Can you tell us a little about 'Watno Dur'  
384 and why you changed it to 'Watan', and the logic behind that.

385 SB: Right. So 'Watno Dur' was started by a friend in 1973, and that's when we also formed an organization  
386 in Vancouver called the Punjabi Literary Association. In '73... summer of '73. And this magazine was also  
387 started at... a friend of mine, he started it so he could become a permanent Canadian, and that would help  
388 him with his status. But he was a poet himself and quite serious in this. It wasn't just for that. So he started  
389 the magazine, and... but he went to... he was trying to educate himself. He went to a university back East, I  
390 think Guelph, at that time, and this was in early 1976. Two, three years. He also went to work in Alberta,  
391 and a couple other people published a few issues when he was away, but then I became the editor of that  
392 magazine in early '76 and I did that for about ten years with a friend joining me in '78, [S--], the assistant  
393 editor. So we both edited this magazine for a few years. Then I think we... it wasn't ten years... I think we  
394 started... the magazine was started in '73. But then I think we stopped in '83 or '84. I was going to school  
395 myself at that time, trying to finish my B.A. and I wanted to do a Masters. And so he was also planning  
396 about school, so we discussed this with our friends in Alberta, and so we stopped it. And they did it for a  
397 couple of years after that.

398 INTVWR1: In Alberta.

399 SB: In Alberta. In Edmonton, and this other place... where the other fellow worked in a paper mill, I think.  
400 Anyway, so we... no, they stopped after a few years as well... so when we... I had finished my Masters,  
401 and we... in this time we also had an organization which we started in 1983 called 'Vancouver Sath'. And  
402 that actually, the whole thing, was done in my home in Burnaby.

403 INTVWR1: In Burnaby.

404 SB: Vancouver Sath. And Sath did mainly theatre. And none of us had any experience with theatre. And it  
405 was, four of us got together in about '81 or '82 and we wrote some articles. This was the period when things  
406 were beginning to... the trouble that Punjab went through for fifteen years... it was just beginning at that  
407 time. Early eighties. From 1978 on. And so, before that, the community was concerned with issues here. The  
408 whole South Asian, at that time, 'Eastern' community. They looked after the issues and problems that we  
409 were having whether it is the racism, mainly, or domestic violence because a lot of women came, following

410 these people who came, early '70s. So they either went back and married, or if they were married, that  
411 their wives came. So the community had a lot of women, new Canadians, and some were educated but some  
412 weren't... but there were a lot of domestic violence. Because men lived alone for a few years, whether it  
413 was in Vancouver or places like Williams Lake or Prince George, wherever. And they were living amongst  
414 men, and you know, after work you would drink. And so drink... everybody was drinking. There might be  
415 some exceptions, but not many. And they had their own ways. And so when the women came, not everyone  
416 was able to adjust to that. And women also had their own lives and point of views and stuff, so there were  
417 family problems. All over. And a lot of people became quite abusive. So domestic violence was another  
418 issue. And the other issue... I'm talking about 'Vancouver Sath', the theatre that we did... we focused on  
419 issues that were of importance here, for the community. And when the Punjab troubles started, towards the  
420 Khalistan movement [-- -- --]. So the whole attention of the community went there. Nobody paid... majority  
421 of them, or they, or people who had the power in the community, the Gurdwaras. And because they,  
422 basically... or even a lot of organizations... they were more concerned with what was happening in Punjab,  
423 in India. We thought that the problems here also need to be paid attention to. And so four or five of us  
424 basically two of us, Sukhwant Hundal and myself, we wrote four... five or six articles on different issues,  
425 what was happening here. Whether it was the domestic violence or the racism or the job issues, and also... a  
426 number of these issues, but we knew, and even before we started writing the articles, that the people in the  
427 Punjabi community didn't read. They weren't reading what we were writing. But we wanted to do  
428 something. So in 1983, this fellow from Punjab, Gursharan Singh, who became quite well known as a  
429 theatre personality in India, he came here with his group, and he was invited by Hari Sharma and his group  
430 IPANA to do theatre here. And we had discussions with him because we knew him through... he knew us  
431 also through our writings. I... He used to publish a magazine, I published a few stories and [then] and some  
432 poetry, so he knew us. And we had discussions with him, and even before he came we was thinking about,  
433 maybe we should raise these issues through theatre. Community theatre. But we had no experience of any  
434 kind. None of us. And when he came we had discussions with him and he said, "You don't need any  
435 experience or anything. You want to say something, issues you know, and just go and do it." We took his  
436 advice, and we did. And so we started writing plays. First I think, a couple of plays were about the problem  
437 in Punjab, and then, later on, we wrote about fourteen original plays. Would be 1983 to 1994, and we  
438 performed those. Some in English as well. The first English play, about picket line... the farmworkers was  
439 another issue that we were involved in, in early '80s, late '70s and early '80s because of the poor conditions  
440 in the farms, and we wrote a play called 'Picket Line'. It was a play about Punjabi women who were  
441 working in the farms, but they were exploited and they didn't know what to do about it. And so, eventually  
442 there is this movement in the community, they become part of the... that movement and also organize. And  
443 they organize their mushroom farm in Langley and the owner wasn't very happy, naturally, so there was  
444 problems and they went on strike. And these women, all Punjabi women, didn't know anything about going  
445 on strike, or trade union movements or anything, and they were so shy they didn't want to stay... stand on  
446 the picket line with a placard in there, around them, because it might... "relatives see me", you know the  
447 kind of issues that people always had. So we wrote that play. We used to go to the picket line, myself and  
448 couple of friends and always helping them there. And so from the discussions and just listening to those  
449 women, we wrote that play called 'Picket Line'. And the discussion about [-] "What are we doing" "I don't  
450 wanna stand on the picket line", [--]... and eventually this fellow, Gary Cristall, who organized the  
451 Vancouver Folk Music Festival, started around that time, he invited us to do that play in English there. And  
452 we were so happy. We got one thousand dollars for doing the play. Before that it was... we spent our own  
453 money. So, anyway, we raised these issues in the community because we wrote some articles, but then  
454 through the theatre... mainly domestic issue. There was a play called 'Lattan De Bhoot' where this man  
455 abuses his wife and then wants to divorce her and was asking her, "get my brother from Punjab", those kind  
456 of issues, and then two issues with the farmworker, 'Picket Line' and 'A Crop of Poison' which we also did  
457 in English, as well. And so the other issue at that time was the marriage, arranged marriage. And because the  
458 people were... young people... were growing up now and they needed to be married, and the parents have  
459 the control on that. Traditionally. And there was young kids born here, or raised here, they weren't very

460 happy with it. So these... some students at U.B.C. did a skit there, a short, I think, ten minute, skit, where  
461 they have this issue in that skit. And one of the students was also our member, she lives in Burnaby, just by  
462 my house now...

463 INTVWR1: What was her name? Harji?

464 SB: Harji.

465 INTVWR1: Harji [--]. She came to our [--]

466 SB: Harjinder Sangra, yeah. And so we wrote a play called 'Kihda Viah?', 'Whose Marriage?'. So the kids  
467 are questioning their parents. And the other issue that we did was... you know there were a lot of elderly,  
468 especially in Vancouver at that time, and they didn't have any place to go. If they went to the beer parlour or  
469 the pubs, they would be discriminated against. They didn't know much English, and they would have their  
470 turbans on but... some of these people wanted to have a drink, and... if they have, enjoy it with each other.  
471 So they didn't have any place to go and do this. They weren't allowed to do this in the gurdwara, religious  
472 place, so they would do this in the park. And the policeman will come in and take their liquor away. So we  
473 wrote a play about that. [Laughs]

474 INTVWR1: Ah.

475 SB: Quite... quite well liked. We called it 'Havelian Te Parkan'. You know the 'haveli' is a place in  
476 Punjabi, settings where you have your home, and then an outside home where you kept your animals and  
477 stuff and that would be called 'haveli'. But also I have another meaning, but that was this meaning, that in  
478 '[--] haveli'. And the parks, now. Really in the parks now. So what they did, in the havelis, at that time, they  
479 were doing in the parks there and they were getting into trouble. So it was a discussion among people, some  
480 old people, that "Why can't we do something on an organized basis in the community?" That sort of thing.  
481 But mainly about the gender issues. There were... this one play that the female members of our group: my  
482 wife, Sukhwant's wife, Harji, [Harkasan], about five of, four of them wrote a play... and we also did for part  
483 of the writing group as well, me and Sukhwant. Called 'Same'... 'Different Age, Same Cage'. It's called  
484 'Different Age, Same Cage'. So here are three separate periods of a woman's life. When she's young she's  
485 treated differently than her brother.

486 INTVWR1: Mm.

487 SB: Right? Brother can go wherever, whatever, after school. She is not to be seen outside, or... all the  
488 restrictions. And then, when she is married, you have a husband who comes from work, take a shower,  
489 relax, open a beer, call a couple of his friends, that's the third notable thing, "Come over. Have a couple of  
490 drinks", and then, "Okay, my friend is coming, so make roti for him as well." So, she's also working now.  
491 She comes home and, total... she have to work three, four hours in the kitchen to feed these people. And  
492 that kind of scenario was very common in many homes. And so that was the second stage of the woman.  
493 The third was when the kids are grown up now. The grandmother who is looking after the kids and you  
494 don't need her anymore because the kids are grown up, so what do you do with your grandmother, she's  
495 sitting here [-- --] to the farms, live in the shacks there, work on the farms and come home in the fall, in  
496 the winter for a few months... that happened quite a bit. So we call that in Punjabi, '[H-- --] ', in English,  
497 'Different Age, Same Cage'. And they did that play about twenty-five times, in different locations, in  
498 English. They were invited all over the place at that time. This is the early nineties. All kinds of conferences  
499 were happening around women issues. A lot in the community. And they were invited to do that. So that, the  
500 kind of theatre that we did, addressed the issues that we had here, and we did it in the language that we used  
501 here. Especially the play 'Kihda Viah?'/ 'Whose Marriage?' was quite successful. Everybody liked it. There

**Transcription: BV022.29.3**

**Interview with Sadhu Binning**

**Audio Recording: 2022\_0029\_0003\_004.mp3**

**Interviewers: INTVWR1: Anushay Malik; INTVWR2: Kate Petrusa**

**Interviewee: SB: Sadhu Binning**

502 were a lot of funny women in it. The same thing with the 'Picket Line' and the older people's, the 'Havelian  
503 Te Parkan', they were quite liked by audiences although we didn't have that kind of setup at that time. And  
504 didn't make any money out of these things. But they did address the issues, and did it in a very nice way.  
505 And so we were quite happy with what we were doing.

506 INTVWR1: Did you...

507 INTVWR2: Where...

508 INTVWR1: Sorry.

509 INTVWR2: I was going to ask where you did these. You mentioned at UBC but...

510 SB: Well, the original skit was done by UBC students.

511 INTVWR2: Oh.

512 SB: We would do it in local schools. Like...

513 INTVWR2: Schools.

514 SB: ... in Vancouver, in David Thompson.

515 INTVWR2: Ah.

516 SB: And the Vancouver... what's the school called on Broadway? Technical?

517 INTVWR2: Yes. Vancouver Tech.

518 SB: Yeah. That school, and basically all... even in community centres like Killarney Community Centre.  
519 So, yeah, in either community centres or in school theatres.

520 INTVWR2: So people would actually ask you to come and you would do it.

521 SB: No no no no no. No no.

522 INTVWR2: Okay, you rented the space.

523 SB: We rented the space.

524 INTVWR2: Okay. Okay.

525 SB: And we invited people.

526 INTVWR2: Okay.

527 SB: And you know, the thing was that we did some plays in other parts. Like we took a couple plays to  
528 Toronto, I think one time to Calgary and Williams Lake and that sort of thing but most of the time just here.  
529 And we would spend three months on creating a play, then just one performance. And sometimes things  
530 didn't work out that well. [Laughs] And so it was very hard labour. And this is again early eighties we're

531 talking about, my kids were young. And it was all the household work in my home, and actually on Irmin  
532 Street, and then in the house that we live in now on Portland. And so, basically, not very satisfying in some  
533 ways that you spent all that time in just one performance and then you have to do the next one. I think we  
534 did twice every year. Two performances, one in the fall, one in the early spring. That's how it went on for a  
535 number of years.

536 INTVWR1: I know there are pictures of you performing in... at SFU with the Canadian Farmworkers  
537 Union...

538 SB: Mhm.

539 INTVWR1: Do you have any pictures of the other plays you did?

540 SB: I think we have a lot of pictures, although we still have the stuff sitting in a box there. The fellow at  
541 SFU, though he retired, he wanted to create the archives there but it didn't happen. So we still have the stuff,  
542 sitting at home. I guess we need to do something about that [laughs].

543 INTVWR1: Fantastic, yeah.

544 SB: [unintelligible]

545 INTVWR1: I mean if...

546 SB: Yeah.

547 INTVWR1: If we can display some of it, that would be excellent.

548 INTVWR2: Yes. That would be...

549 SB: That can happen... I'll look for it then. Yeah.

550 INTVWR1: Thank...thank you so much. And the last question that... and please keep... feel free to tell,  
551 say, if I've missed anything, the last question is really about food. [Laughs.]

552 SB: Mhm.

553 INTVWR1: So what is your favourite food, who cooks it in your home, and, yeah, where do you get your,  
554 especially when you came, if you have any memory, [m-- masalay] or spices, your ingredients, where did  
555 you get them from.

556 SB: There was a shop on Hastings and Clarke. What was the name of it? It was very... every Punjabi knew  
557 that shop. And that's where we went for all the Indian food.

558 INTVWR1: Is this Famous Foods?

559 SB: No no.

560 INTVWR1: Okay.

561 SB: I don't think it was Famous Foods. But that's the only place for, in the beginning, when we came in

562 'sixty-seven, that you could get stuff. Later on there were other places, eventually. And also on another fact,  
563 there's only I think, one or two people who would show Hindi films. And that would be once a week. You  
564 know, entertainment. There was no place... I used to regularly read this magazine in Punjabi, in Punjab.  
565 When I came here they also, they had a connect... a person who lives in Kamloops, lived in Kamloops at  
566 that time, who was connected with that magazine called [Prit Larhi]

567 INTVWR1: Yes, I've heard the name.

568 SB: Yeah. He was a famous person, [G—Singh], who was educated in the States, in 1920s and went back in  
569 1930s and started the magazine in 1935, I think. Still... still is going on, that magazine. And I used to get  
570 that on a monthly basis. And I couldn't get that here for six months and that was the most upsetting for me.  
571 The food, as far as food is concerned, basically my mom did the cooking for all of us. My father, my  
572 younger brother, and because of one of the... You know we came in 'sixty-seven, and three years after all  
573 these other people came. And quite a few of my friends, radicals, and my friends' friends... at one point we  
574 had sixty-seven people using our address on 13<sup>th</sup> Avenue.

575 INTVWR2: [laughs]

576 SB: And all of these people would drop in at least two of three times a week and some every day to look for  
577 their mail and get tea from my mom, and a lot of times get fed by her. And she would be cooking the whole  
578 day. [Laughs.] And making tea. And... and... but some of those people still remember this. When my mom  
579 passed away, back in 2016, this fellow came from Toronto, especially, and he made that long trip for my  
580 mom, [s--]. So yeah, it was basically women's work, as [---] see, so my Mom did all the good cooking. We,  
581 none of us, helped her in any way.

582 INTVWR2: Yeah.

583 INTVWR1: What... what was your mother's name?

584 SB: [G---]

585 INTVWR1: [G--]

586 SB: [---], yeah.

587 INTVWR1: Do have a picture of her?

588 SB: We have some pictures, yeah. We... when the farmworkers were... they also had this... English classes  
589 that they... they ran for a while, and I think the one picture is with this teacher... I think Dave Jackson was  
590 his name. You... the one who found that [maluka] for us.

591 INTVWR1: Ah, okay.

592 SB: So there's a connection. So he was also English teacher for the... I think he worked... I don't know if  
593 he was paid, but... for the Farmworker's Union, and also helping people English. So, yeah, when we moved  
594 away, myself and my wife, in 'seventy-three, after getting married, she did most of the cooking. I probably  
595 did help in getting groceries [laughs] from the store, but not much else. To be honest. So it was basically  
596 her, and the food was traditional food. We didn't really switch to... we did eat beef, that was no problem in  
597 our family, and meat, you know, all kinds of meat, and also mainly chicken. You know, chicken curry was a  
598 favourite, still is. And so we would, you know, during the week we would use whatever was cooked on



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**Interview with Sadhu Binning**

**Audio Recording: 2022\_0029\_0003\_004.mp3**

**Interviewers: INTVWR1: Anushay Malik; INTVWR2: Kate Petrusa**

**Interviewee: SB: Sadhu Binning**

599 weekends and so that's how, about where... when the kids were young... Eventually you try to be a  
600 Canadian and be helpful in whatever way, but in my case because I had these all... other things happening,  
601 my wife had to do most of the work. And the rehearsal would be happening there, so we would have to  
602 make tea for everybody, and then you know, these kinds of things. And that happened in Burnaby, all that  
603 activity. All the weekend...

604 INTVWR1: So most of the rehearsals for all these plays would happen...

605 SB: All these plays, it would be at our place in Burnaby.

606 INTVWR1: Okay.

607 INTVWR2: Yeah.

608 SB: Later on, my brother moved to Richmond and he was involved in the community centre there, East  
609 Richmond Community Centre on No. 5 Road and Cambie, there, and so we would use that community  
610 centre for our rehearsals, and also sometimes even for our meetings that we had either we want to release a  
611 book or some writers have this thing and we might have a meeting for them. So it was the East Richmond  
612 Community Centre became the centre for us, for quite a while and we did a lot of rehearsals there so... but  
613 before that was my home.

614 INTVWR1: And I'm done with the questions unless there's something else to add, but I did... there was  
615 something I wanted to follow up on, which is, you mentioned people used to show Hindi films.

616 SB: Mhm

617 INTVWR1: So was this in like a theatre setting?

618 SB: Yeah. A theatre setting.

619 INTVWR1: Oh.

620 SB: I remember seeing the first Hindi film on Hastings Street, there was a theatre just off Main Street on  
621 Hastings.

622 INTVWR1: Mhm

623 SB: On... on south side of Hastings, I remember, so there was a theatre there. And the fellow who showed  
624 the film was a friend of my uncle, Dhaliwal, I think, his last name. And then, so he would show, and after  
625 that, soon after that, other people also sort of got into the business. And I remember before I got married, we  
626 would see a film on Nanaimo and Hastings. There's... again, on Hastings but right where Nanaimo crosses  
627 Hastings. There's a theatre... used to be there. I don't know if it's there now. We saw a film there. So, yeah,  
628 these kind of sort of places, they would show these films.

629 INTVWR1: Were any of them in Burnaby?

630 SB: I don't think so.

631 INTVWR1: Okay.

632 SB: No, I don't think so.

633 INTVWR1: Okay.

634 [next tape begins with conversation in progress]

635 INTVWR1: I heard part of that...

636 SB: Yeah.

637 INTVWR1: In one of your interviews and...

638 SB: Right.

639 INTVWR1: So the question we we're just asking that we missed was why 'Watno Dur' the magazine was  
640 changed to 'Watan'.

641 SB: Yeah. When I was... when I came here in 'sixty-seven, I didn't have too many friends here. And, for  
642 whatever reason, I felt very homesick. And from day one I wanted to go back. To Punjab. And I didn't have  
643 any education, you know. I...when I... my father had come to as... sort of thing, if you didn't have parents  
644 to push you, you know you didn't really care much about that. The sort of education part. I did, but I didn't  
645 succeed. I failed Grade Eleven, which was the hard secondary year at that time when I came here and the  
646 reason was that I saw too many films and read too many books. You know, [--] and stuff. So I felt homesick  
647 here, you know, and I wanted to go back. And for that reason, I decided and promised myself that 'I will  
648 educate myself and then go back and become a lecturer or a teacher or something.' That was the goal. So I,  
649 right when... even when I was working in the sawmill in North Vancouver, a friend suggested, who was  
650 also working there but he was sort of Canadian-born, Punjabi. He said that, 'Why don't you try Post  
651 Office?' It's a better job there. I didn't have any confidence, I could read English and... but speaking part,  
652 no confidence, very shy, even in the school, and so I said, 'Nobody will hire me.' He said, 'Well if they  
653 don't hire you, they won't keep you there, you can still come home.' And that year, at the mill, he brought a  
654 form. I filled the form and I was called to do an interview and the fellow asked me that, 'You're working in  
655 the sawmill and making more money. Why do you want to work in the post office?' I said, 'Look, I want to  
656 educate myself. When I go to the class at night after working eight hours in the mill, I can't keep myself  
657 awake. 'Cause it, the work is so hard. I want some, you know, a bit easy job so I could go to school.' He  
658 didn't ask me anything else. He gave me the job. And. So. Post office compared to [-] was a breezy job. I  
659 sort of, first few days, was a bit nervous. I had sort of went and talked to the... the supervisor at the mill, I  
660 said, and I sort of knew him, had worked there for two years, I said, 'I'm now going to try this job, if it  
661 doesn't work, can I come back?' He said 'Okay.' So I was secure on that side, too. So anyway, the post  
662 office worked well for me, and I read a lot of books. I wrote a lot of poetry. I wrote short stories like crazy  
663 while working in the post office. So from Grade Eight I did a Master's. You know, it took me many years,  
664 but I did it. By the time I was in final years of my B.A. and then M.A., I got involved with all other things in  
665 the community. And somewhere there, it clicked. That if you want to... that if you ever really wanted to go  
666 back to India, was to be part of the revolution, in this 'Sixties dream of young people. And I... sort of I  
667 came to the conclusion that I can... I didn't do any of this here. I can do this here, if you want to work for  
668 the community. So I decided, on my own, that I want to stay here. But I want to be a Punjabi Canadian, not  
669 just a Canadian. A Punjabi Canadian. So the language, and literature, became very important for me. But I  
670 decided, that this is where I'm gonna stay. In Canada. I'm not gonna go back. And with that sort of mind,  
671 I'd written two or three poems, one was 'The Revelations' where my father passed away, I took his ashes to  
672 the river, which was illegal, I didn't know that. And so I wrote the poem and the last line is that maybe  
673 that's what my father meant by the revelations of river to men. Right, that you have this relationship. And

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**Interview with Sadhu Binning**

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**Interviewers: INTVWR1: Anushay Malik; INTVWR2: Kate Petrusa**

**Interviewee: SB: Sadhu Binning**

674 many of my poems and my poetry, actually three anthologies that I did, the names reflect the connection  
675 with the waters, with the rivers. Especially Fraser River. That's where I spend even my... most of the time  
676 now. And so, that kind of mind, and I wrote poems about it. When we re-started the magazine in 1989 at the  
677 seventy-fifth anniversary of Komagata Maru. The first issue was on Komagata Maru, we did a lot of  
678 research from the archives, and brought in a lot of, not just pictures, but a lot of articles that weren't  
679 published in the community, or not everybody has seen them before. So we translated those into Punjabi,  
680 myself, Sukhwant and a couple of other people. And so that magazine, the first issue, was on Komagata  
681 Maru, and we decided to name that 'Watan'. That this is the country now. No more, no good 'Watno Dur'.  
682 And my poem is also about the same... you know, that this is my 'Watan'. Two or three poems that I wrote.

683 INTVWR1: Can you tell us the title of one of them, so we can follow up later?

684 SB: I think the one is called 'No More Watno Dur, But [-]'. I think, I thought the other is [-- --],  
685 that, the other one that I mentioned. [H-- --]

686 INTVWR1: [H-- --] Okay.

687 SB: Yeah.

688 SB: And 'Watno Dur [--]'.  
689 INTVWR1: Thank you.

690 SB: And also couple poems that I wrote in the early part of almost 1974 were about Komagata Maru. One,  
691 'The Heartbreaking Incident'. That was published many places. In... for... I don't know for what [laughs].  
692 So yeah, that was the reason that we changed the name of the magazine.

693 INTVWR1: Fantastic.

694 SB: 'Watno Dur' to 'Watan'.

695 INTVWR1: Thank you so much. Thank you for that [--].

696 SB: I always worry that I talk too much and somebody should stop me, but I don't know. (they all laugh)