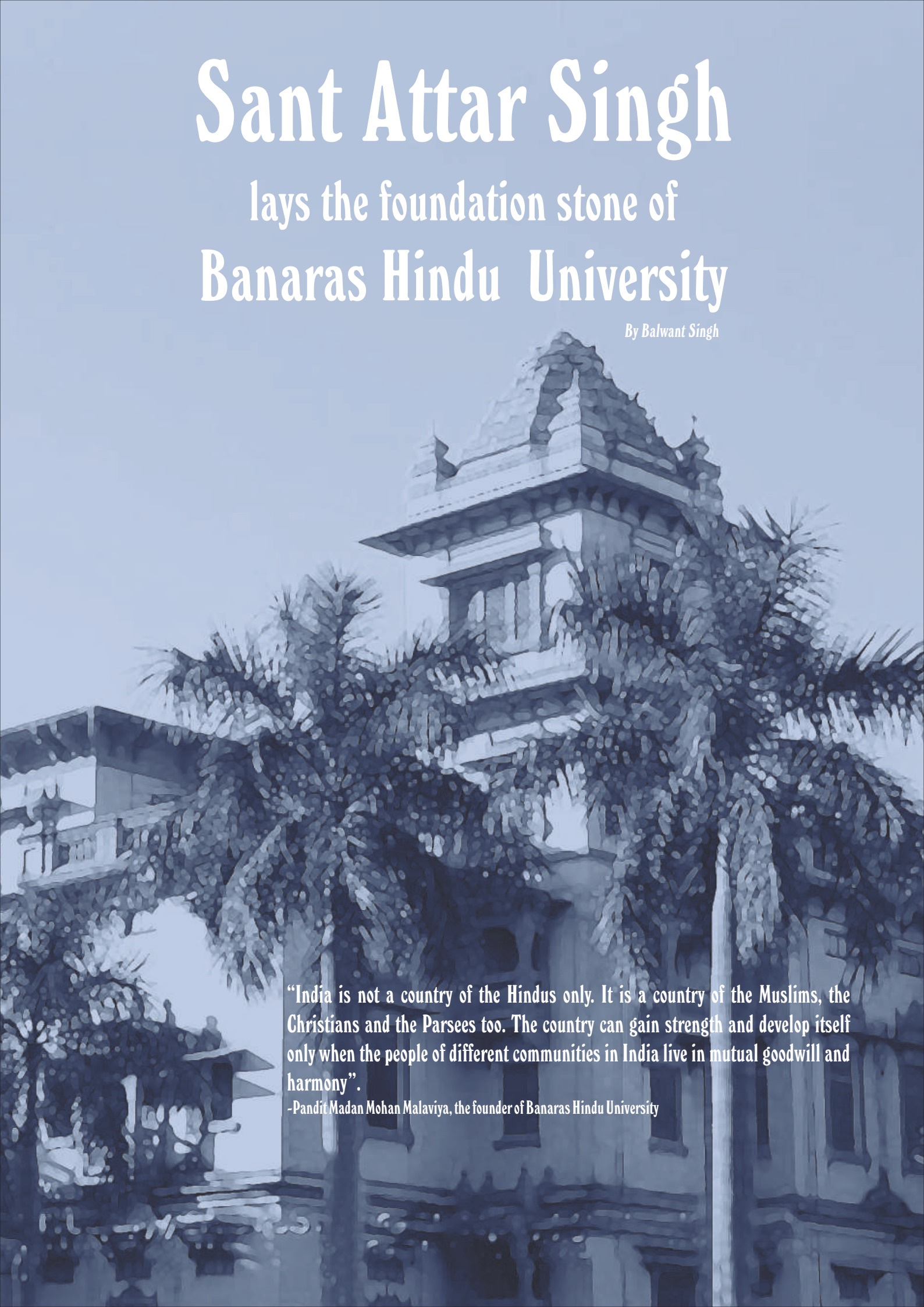


Sant Attar Singh

lays the foundation stone of Banaras Hindu University

By Balwant Singh



“India is not a country of the Hindus only. It is a country of the Muslims, the Christians and the Parsees too. The country can gain strength and develop itself only when the people of different communities in India live in mutual goodwill and harmony”.

-Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, the founder of Banaras Hindu University

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These golden words were uttered by *Pandit* Madan Mohan Malaviya, the founder of Banaras Hindu University, which is perhaps the largest Central University imparting high class education and can be considered among the best Universities of the world. It is undoubtedly the largest residential University in Asia, comprising 128 teaching departments with enrolment of over 15,000. The Institute of Engineering and that of Medicine and Science are among the best in India. The degree holders of these Institutes hold high positions not only in India but also in USA and various other countries of the world.

In the year 1875 Sir Syed Ahmed Khan founded 'Mohammedan Anglo-Oriental College' at Aligarh, realizing the need for modern education on the pattern of University of Cambridge. Later the college was upgraded to University in 1920 and named Aligarh Muslim University.

And in 1904 *Pandit* Madan Mohan Malaviya also thought of establishing a Hindu University and started working whole time for it leaving his lucrative law practice. During the same period Annie Besant and other leaders were also working for a similar cause and established Central Hindu College at Banaras. In 1911 all joined hands and formed "The Hindu University Society" under the leadership of *Pandit Ji* with its headquarters at Allahabad. *Kashi Naresb* Dr Vibhuti Narain Singh donated 1500 acres of land at Banaras for this noble cause.

In the second quarter of 1914, a meeting of the society was held. On the agenda was just one item "Whom should we invite to lay the foundation stone?"

All agreed that the foundation stone should be laid by a 'pious personality'.

Who is and where is such a saint? One of the members suggested that there is one in Punjab but he is a Sikh. *Pandit Ji* retorted, "Then what?" We shall get the foundation stone laid by him only.

In May 1914, caring little for the summer heat, *Pandit Ji*, with some of his followers, left for Sant Attar Singh's *Asbaram* at Mastuana, at the border of the then Nabha and Patiala States. He traveled by train up to Sangrur, the capital of Jind State.

The *Asbaram* was approximately at a distance of 8 Km. *Pandit Ji* removed his shoes at Sangrur railway station and started walking bare-foot on the sandy road. Some body asked him why he was doing so? He replied that he was going to meet a holy person for a holy cause and hence he should be humble and respectful.

The news that *Pandit* Madan Mohan Malaviya was coming to Mastuana spread like a wildfire. One of Sant Attar Singh's followers, because of the summer heat and poor road condition, sent for a few mares, which the *Pandit Ji* politely refused.

On his arrival at the *Asbaram*, *Pandit Ji* found *Sant Ji* reciting Kabir's hymns:

Awal Allah noor upaai kudrat ke sab bande

Eik noor te sab jag upjaya kaun bhale ko mande. (1349)

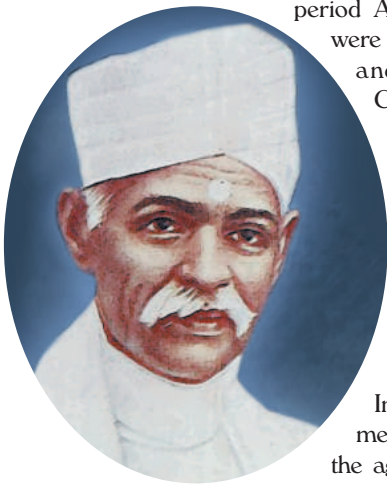
(From the One and the same Light, the entire universe came into existence. How can there be good or bad among them?)

On listening Kabir *Baani*, *Pandit Ji* felt and expressed that he had come to the right place.

It was decided to lay the foundation stone of the university on 24 December, 1914.

Sant Attar Singh traveled to Banaras in the private royal train of *Maharaja* Ripudaman Singh of Nabha along with *Maharaja* Bhupinder Singh of Patiala and reached there a few days prior to the fixed date. At the railway station *Pandit Ji* in the company of *Maharaja* Vibhuti Narain Singh, *Maharaja* Ganga Singh of Bikaner and the *Maharajas* of Indore, Gwalior, Alwar and Darbhanga received Sant Attar Singh. The railway station was tastefully decorated with buntings and flowers. There was a carpet from the train up to the specially decorated royal gold plated carriage of the *Kashi Naresb*. As the *Sant Ji's* carriage, pulled by the hosts (not by horses), passed through the *Bazaars*, the crowds showered flowers from shops and house-tops. Outside the city, the public climbed up the trees to have a glimpse of *Sant Ji*. This warm reception continued unto the proposed site of the University, where special tents were put-up for the guests' stay.

For 10 days there was continuous reading (Akhand Paths) of Guru Granth Sahib in a specially decorated tent. The *Maharajas* and public performed *Sewa* and *Langar* was distributed for one and all. *Gurbani Kirtan* was recited in the morning and evening. It was attended by all. Thirty-one



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On the 10th day, Kashi Naresh Vibhuti Narain Singh handed over a trawl made of gold to Sant Attar Singh and 11 bricks of Gold were handed over to Sant Ji by Pandit Ji and other Maharajas one by one, which were laid in the foundation dug for the building of the University.

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In 1915 the University Establishment Ceremony was performed by Lord Hardinge, the then Viceroy and Governor General and the University Bill passed.

Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya requested Sant Attar Singh to spare his disciple Sant Teja Singh to head the Teachers' Training College.

At the end of the ceremony, *Sant Ji* took *Pandit Ji* aside and said, "When we started Khalsa College at Amritsar in 1893, we admitted one Hindu child, one *Musalmaan*, and one Sikh to start with."

Catching the point, the great patriot replied, "By all means" and declared:

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The Tiger and the Fox

By Massud Farzan

A fox who lived in the deep forest long ago had lost its front legs. No one knew how: perhaps escaping from a trap. A man who lived on the edge of the forest, seeing the fox from time to time, wondered how in the world it managed to get its food. One day, when the fox was not far from him he had to hide himself quickly because a tiger was approaching. The tiger had fresh game in its claws. Lying down on the ground, it ate its fill, leaving the rest for the fox.

Again the next day the great Provider of this world sent provisions to the fox by this same tiger. The man began to think: "If this fox is taken care of in this mysterious way, its food sent by some unseen Higher power, why don't I just rest in a corner and have daily meal provided for me?"

Since he had a lot of faith, he let the days pass, waiting for food. Nothing happened. He just went on losing weight and strength until he was nearly a skeleton. Close to losing consciousness, he heard the Truth:

"You should have followed the example of that tiger instead of imitating the disabled fox."



A Short Story