

Interviewed 16th April 2023, Vancouver, Canada

Names: Shamsher Singh, Parvish Kumar, Wesak Singh Khalsa

Helmand Province

My name is Parvish Kumar, I am from Helmand province and I am 28 years old. It's been almost a year since I came to Canada with my family and children, and there were 65 families in Helmand, which used to be a lot, and after the wars, many people who had money left the country and went to London, Canada and India. When we were Americans, 65 families lived in Helmand and the situation was relatively better. And after they left, the problems increased and even our children stayed out of school, and the other annoying things were that we didn't have a Hindu cremation place, and in the late evenings, out of necessity, we burned our dead at night because they were bothering people during the day. . Life was very difficult and when the women of our people went to the hospitals to give birth, the officials told the women that you are infidels and Muslim blood is not acceptable to infidels. In government departments, including security areas, none of our complaints could be addressed and they said that people are not under our control. And now there are 11 of us left in Afghanistan who are also waiting for their visas. We had a lot of Muslim customers for Greek medicine, but later a radio station was created in the name of teaching Islam, they were broadcasting that you should not do business with Hindus because they are infidels, but their elders were still good, but the young people misbehaved.

Shamsher Singh: From 2001 to the time of Dr. Sahib Najibullah, one hundred and twenty thousand Sikhs lived in Helmand, and in Kandahar province, there was a bazaar of Sikhs and Hindus called Sape Bazaar in Markit Tara Singh, which was all about trade. It was their [Sikhs'] hands. In Kandahar, trade was mostly in the form of imports, and Sikh people brought goods, and some of them also made bezaai and halvai. And it was good during Karzai's rule, but after December 2014 and the withdrawal of NATO and American troops, everything went wrong, and we, the people, were in search of leaving our homeland because we didn't have money, so we sent emails everywhere so that we could escape from it. Get rid of bad conditions.

We sent an email to Canada Citizen Ship and they also refused to answer, but an organization that was established by Mamneet Singh Bhullar and is in Toronto helped. There was a process where after applying for immigration and ship sponsorship, we had to go to India, Pakistan or Bangladesh, and we went to India. And for three years, they had rented a place in a gurdwara in Punjab and had to bear all our expenses. Some families who remained in Afghanistan were given passports and tickets. In 2019, 25 families immigrated to India. In 2018, as a result of a suicide attack in Nangarhar, almost all the Sikh leadership was destroyed and martyred, and then in 2020, a deadly attack happened in Shorebazaar, which caused many Sikhs to come to Canada and the Canadian government to accept And 65 families have come here so far, and 200 more families are sponsored by Mamneet Singh Bhullar Foundation. Almost 272 Sikhs have been sponsored by the Canadian government out of 600 tons. And here, where we live, our children, who did not go to school in Afghanistan, go to school and work at night in restaurants. At the time of Dr. Najibullah, we used to think that Helmand and Kandahar and the government were very good. We are the original Sikhs from Helmand and we were born there in Marjah district or in Tarawt, Dehrudeh and Trinkot districts and during the time of Najibullah, our lands were there. We can't go back there now. The old Safian in Helmand was built in 1980 during the time of Karmal Sahib. And in Uruzgan, during our year, it was in the middle of a house. And we used to go back and forth to Kandahar and Uruzgan,

and the shopkeepers brought money from Kandahar, in addition to Kandahar, they also brought money from India and Pakistan. There was a lot of Dharmasal in Kandahar, in Kabul Bazaar, in Ashkapur Bazaar, and Baba Srijand had come to Kandahar, and our holy place is also there, and now in Helmand, we don't pay money to maintain the Dharmasal of the people. Indian people who were in Kandahar travelled to different countries such as France, London and other Arab countries. These people used to talk in Multani and Sarki languages, and our people also speak Multani and Sarki. At this time, Afghanistan has gone back 100 years and is lagging behind everything. And we, the people of Helmand, Azrakan and Kandahar are fighting among ourselves, and the people of Nangarhar, Ghazni and Laghman are fighting among themselves. So far, we have not been outside of Afghanistan.

Saxeng Khalsa: I was born in Uruzgan and I came to Helmand when I was 5 years old during Zahir Shah's regime and because we were given land, I went there and we only had one shelter. I also had a shop in Lashkargah and there was also a school that called us Hindu infidels when school was closed. At the time of Zahir Shah, he had distributed approximately 35 families from both Kandara and Azaragan in Marjeh Zamin district. At that time, I was 5 years old and I was given land in 1943, and after that the war started and our people went to Lashkargah. And to insult the land and say it belongs to the Hindus and it is not permissible to give money, and they gave us half the price of our land, and with the same excuses, some gave less than half to our people for the land, and some did not give us any money, and our land They angered At the time of Turki, I was in Lashkargah and served two periods of military service, the first period in Helmand and the second period in Kandahar, and now I am happy, but life in Afghanistan is not fun because there is no such thing as humanity. I used to go to the office as a lawyer and representative of the people, but they hated me because the lawyers themselves said that you are a Hindu. In Afghanistan, there is no literacy, there is complete ethnic and sectarianism, and there is no humanity. After the revolution, the war escalated in Lashkargah and everyone.

A group joined and started doing many irregularities. At the end of Dr. Najibullah's term, I went to India, where there was no cooperation with us either. We went back home [to Helmand] and when the Mujahideen took over Helmand for the first time, I arrived in Helmand on the same day. And at that time, when I was there, the Taliban had arranged another nonsense, which was a yellow badge (pati) on our pockets so that we would be different from others and Muslims would not greet us. And to have a black colour on the objects so that they are different. We are men of the desert, because Dirut is located between two mountains, and we people grew up in the mountains, and when we came to Helmand, we were among ourselves, and our life was a desert, and from the point of view of our clothes, we are the same people of Helmand and Khost, and we had good relations. . I went to school up to the 8th grade and we used to speak Pashto among the people of Khost and chat in Sarki's house. In Helmand, there were some people who were dearer than brothers and some of them who were not allowed to go to our mission station were stabbed, which is very valuable in our religion to enter their office.

And twice a day we went to worship. And during the era of Dr. Najibullah Nagar Kretan patrolled the entire market of Helmand, and after Dr. Najib's era, we Sikhs did not see happiness again.