

## All THAT I AM - A poem by The Singh Twins

This Painting tells a story true  
Of times gone by and of someone who  
Represents a generation  
Whose courage, sweat and determination  
Made us who we are today  
By laying the foundations and paving the way  
For a better life on foreign shores.  
A life of opportunity and open doors  
Previously closed to his Indian race  
Which was deemed inferior by the whiter face  
Of a Nation still steeped in Empire days  
With its cultural supremacy and colonial ways.

This someone was born not so far  
From the Golden Temple in Amritsar.  
There he lived to the age of eight  
Till India's politics changed his fate  
And British policy of divide and rule  
(Which fanned the fire and added fuel  
To a call for freedom based on religious division)  
Ended in the bloody Partition  
Of historic Punjab, the land of five rivers  
And home of the Sikhs whose swords and quivers  
Protected all, against invasion and tyranny  
Defending justice, equality and the right to be free.

Away from India's strife and turmoil  
His father, working on English soil  
Called for the family to join him there  
Sending them the journey's fare.  
So holding tight his Mata ji's hand  
He left behind his Motherland.  
Setting sail from the port of Bombay  
and braving the oceans all the way  
To Tilbury Dock near London's heart  
Then onwards to another part  
Of England, south of the Pennine Hills  
And a city famed for its cotton mills.

Manchester was his new home's name  
But nothing about it was the same  
As the culture and people he'd left behind  
Yet continued to cherish in his heart and mind.  
Although only nine, he worked, door to door  
Selling pure silk stockings, ties and more  
Alongside his father, following family tradition  
Whilst dreaming all day of a higher ambition  
To seek a profession that would, in effect,  
Earn him a position of social respect,  
That challenged the Englishman's stereotype view  
Of all Indians as "coolies"- except for a few.

As a young man he looked for a skilled career  
And worked for a while as an engineer.  
Through comics and books he learned to read  
And write the language he knew he would need  
To become an educated man  
And pursue his extraordinary plan  
To study for a medical degree -  
A first, in his own community  
And unheard of then, in a time and place  
Where class division, colour and race  
Kept you where you were born to be  
And dictated your position in society.

Defying the sceptics and against all odds  
He succeeded by taking on multiple jobs  
To support his family and pay his fees  
Through London and Liverpool Universities.  
Times were hard and it was not with ease  
That he graduated (in fact with several Degrees)  
As a Bachelor of Medicine and of Surgery  
With Honours in Science and a PhD.  
Yet still, his achievements did not wane.  
After becoming a Doctor he bought a plane  
Gained a pilots licence, and then,  
A Certificate in Aviation Medicine.

Reaching Forty, he longed to roam  
Back to India and his ancestral home.  
So, being himself an adventurous man  
He built, with his brothers, a caravan.  
And drove his family from the port of Dover  
Through Europe, the Middle East, Pakistan and over  
the Wagah border into India at last  
Where for nine months they travelled, exploring their past.  
Visiting palaces, shrines and historic places  
And discovering India's many faces.  
Then, back to England, with a reviving stay  
In romantic Venice along the way.

Hidden within this painting too  
Are details relating to just a few  
Of the stories which we, the artists concur  
Speak volumes about the character  
Of someone who, for us, reflects  
The qualities and values we respect.  
A man of science but also of Art  
A mighty lion with a gentle heart  
A man of compassion who's not thought twice  
About making personal sacrifice  
For the sake of family, which he holds dear.  
Principled, determined, fair and sincere.

This someone, we are proud to say  
Is our father who in every way  
Has been a pillar to us all,  
Inspired our lives and helped us stand tall  
As daughters, who he's enabled to see  
That being proud of your heritage and identity  
And striving to be the best you can be  
Brings, fulfilment, dignity and security  
Not only to oneself and family  
But, to the rest of ones community.  
And that whatever obstacles are put your way  
With belief and hard work you can win the day.

As we offer our tribute here  
One thing remains undeniably clear.

To 'All That [he] Is', there is so much more  
Than our painting alone, can fully explore.

**Text © The Singh Twins:www.singhtwins.co.uk**