



The Panthic Weekly



Last Update: Sunday 9th of April 2006 *Updated Every Sunday*

KP Khalsa Press
ISSN : 1930-0107

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ON THIS DAY

1766 :
PaharGanj, Delhi was conquered by Khalsa Forces.

Film Release - The Widow Colony: India's Unsettled Settlement

Sunday 22nd of January 2006

Editors

San Antonio, Texas (KP) – Socio-political leaders, human rights activists, community leaders and civic organizations came together for the international premier of the film, "The Widow Colony – India's Unsettled Settlement" on the 26th of November 2005 at New Delhi's Siri Fort auditorium. The film, directed by Harpreet Kaur, explores the continued suffering of victims of the anti-Sikh pogroms in India. It records their battle for justice and struggle for survival.

A moving and emotional depiction of the trauma that still haunts innumerable widows of the Sikh massacre, the film unearths the sad and deplorable condition most of these widows are living in the vidhva (widow) colonies of Delhi. Produced by Sach Productions, the film records the testimonies of victims, Sikh widows and men, who survived the bloodbath of November '84. The context to the anti-Sikh violence is provided by the following subject

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experts: Justice Sachar, Harvinder Singh Phoolka, Kuldeep Nayar, Patwant Singh, Madhu Kishwar, and Jaskaran Kaur. The film focuses on the incalculable loss of human life. Scores of widows were created in Delhi, most of whom lived in colonies of Trilokpuri, Kalyanpuri, Himatpuri, Sultanpuri and Mongolpuri. A conservative estimate puts the total number of dead around 4,000. And if losing their loved ones was not enough, justice has been denied to these victims for over two decades. Rather, three accused were awarded with cabinet level positions in the Indian government.

The international premiere and a panel discussion were organized by the Sikh Research Institute. A reflection was shared by Harpreet Kaur, director of The Widow Colony, followed by a personal statement from Darshan Kaur, a victim and fierce activist. Harinder Singh, Executive Director of Sikh Research Institute, mentioned that pogroms will recur in India, unless the State acknowledges and records these violations in a transparent and honest manner, works honestly towards cleansing itself of the people and the institutions that perpetrate these crimes, and addresses the survivors' right to knowledge, justice, and reparation. He concluded, "I hope you'll lose some sleep tonight. But when the dust and the emotions settle, do something on behalf of all unrepresented and downtrodden people."

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Panel discussion raised many critical questions, from the issues of justice to rehabilitation. The widows have been living under meager conditions for decades; unable to give proper care to their children, the widow colonies are filled with uneducated jobless youth. Panel chairman Patwant Singh, author and orator, discounted the notion of "we should forget about it" and cautioned against dire consequences due to judicial failure. Soli Sorabjee, former Attorney General of India, raised the issue of impunity. Harvinder Singh Phoolka, the champion of victims, shared legal hindrances. Manoj Mitta, Senior Editor of The Times of India, emphasized the role of Kamal Nath in massacre. Amita Malik, a film critic, highlighted arts as a medium for awareness and social justice. The discussions highlighted the halfhearted efforts of successive governments to punish the accused.

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