

Where is Justice?

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- I came to Canada with my wife in 1974. Our son Deepak was born in 1976. In 1983, we moved to Sherwood Park, Alberta. After we came to Alberta, my wife Muktha was able to stay home full time with our son while I worked. This was a very happy time because when she was working, we both were on shift work and saw very little of one another. We had a happy home. She was active in the community, involved in the church and enjoyed singing. She was a very talented classical singer. She was also good at knitting and making her own dresses. Deepak was a very talented boy and a good piano player. He liked track and field at school.
- Originally, the three of us were supposed to travel together to India on July 6, 1985, but Muktha's niece from New Delhi called and asked her to come early and spend some time with them. As a result, Muktha and Deepak left early on June 23, 1985. I stayed behind and intended to follow them in a couple of weeks.
- I took Deepak and Muktha to the Edmonton International Airport that morning at 8:00a.m. I left for work around 6:00p.m. that day. At around 3:00a.m., I turned the radio on the CBC. I heard the news that an Air India flight had disappeared off the air traffic control screen. You can't believe how I felt.
- After it happened, my friends and neighbours came to be with me. I felt I did not belong to this world or my mind was totally obliterated or a strange feeling of void or helplessness prevailed around me. After the disaster, I went to Ireland with my brother-in-law. When we arrived, there was no Canadian presence in Ireland. The High Commissioner from India was there and he had contact with the family. We felt at home in Ireland. After a few more days, some Canadian officials arrived. I described one of them as having his hands in his pants' pocket all the time. They did not comfort us. Ultimately, I went to Cork. They found my wife but not my son.
- After the disaster, I was not offered any counselling. Instead, I threw myself into my work just to get myself through the day. My co-workers were also very kind during this time and on the anniversary of the disaster.
- I remember now that the Wednesday before they left, I heard a report on CBC News that the ISYF, International Sikh Youth Federation, warned all Sikhs not to travel by Air India. Why weren't we advised not to fly? Why didn't the Canadian authorities take these threats seriously? I do not understand how at the height of Sikh militancy they could have overlooked such comments. Why was the surveillance on militant Sikhs called off at that time? I understand that threats were made at a gathering at Madison Square Gardens that 50,000 people would die. How could they ignore that? What more was required to wake up CSIS and the RCMP? I felt like I was totally in the dark during the investigation. I can't believe that CSIS tapes were mistakenly erased at a time when the entire world was looking at this tragedy. We are not a banana republic. Are we supposed to believe that CSIS was such a Mickey Mouse

operation? If we are just supposed to believe that this was a case of incompetence, was someone fired?

- I would like to say that I am a great admirer of Doug Henderson and the way he assisted us, as well as Gary Bass and Maryam Majedi, from Victim Services. Nunziata needs a special mention. These people shared our pain and fought for us. I also want to give thanks to Kim Bolan. She put her life on the line and went to Punjab as an investigative reporter. Such people give us a lot of hope. She was very brave not to let go. I also think Bob Rae is a very genuine person.
- I recall at some point after the disaster there was an attempt at a civil claim. It felt to me the conclusion was mainly driven by the lawyers for Air India, not by our lawyer. Perhaps the settlement would have been a whole lot different had this tragedy happened to mainstream Canadians. The settlement was peanuts.
- Right from the beginning, I felt that the public, particularly our leaders, assumed it to be purely an East Indian issue, a bunch of East Indians travelling to India by Air India plane that was blown apart in open skies by Indian thugs, so why bother? It was not considered to be a Canadian issue at all. Were these not talented children, including Deepak ... the future of Canada?
- I hope the Inquiry can bring some answers. This tragedy must not be allowed to repeat. I do not want Canada to be known as a safe haven for terrorists.