CHAPTER-2

FOUNDATION AND GROWTH OF DERA BEAS

This chapter deals with the growth of Beas centre of Radha Soami Satsang which emerged as its second major centre, the first being that of Agra. Beas centre of Radha Soami Satsang is situated on the bank of River Beas at Amritsar District in Punjab and is on half way between Amritsar and Jalandhar. It was founded by Jaimal Singh in 1891, known as Dera Baba Jaimal Singh.1 Besides it is also called as Dera, Dera Beas, Dera Radha Soamis, Radha Soami Satsang Beas or Radha Soami Colony. With the passage of time, this Dera has turned into a beautiful township and gained popularity among the major philosophical centres of the country. Five spiritual Masters have presided over this centre since its inception such as Baba Jaimal Singh (1891-1903), Baba Sawan Singh (1903-1948), Baba Jagat Singh (1948-1951), Baba Charan Singh (1951-1990) and Baba Gurinder Singh (1990 to present). In the following pages, their early lives, installation as Master and growth of Dera Beas under them have been discussed in detail.

1
Baba Jaimal Singh, the founder and the first Master of Dera Beas was born in 1839 in the village of Ghuman, about 18 miles north of the present Dera. His father was Jodh Singh and mother was Daya Kaur. He had two brothers- Jeevan Singh and Dan Singh and two sisters- Tabo and Rajo.2 At the age of five, he was sent to Khem Das, a learned person of his village, from whom he learnt Gurmukhi and the recitation of Adi Granth.3 In his childhood, Jaimal Singh was religious by nature and spent most of his

3 Kapur, Heaven on Earth, p.3.
time in the company of sadhus, faqirs and yogis. The regular reading of the Adi Granth made him bent towards an intense longing of God. At the age of twelve, he was sent to his married sister Tabo’s village Sathiala by his father in order to divert his attention but in vain. At Sathiala, Jaimal learnt pranayam from a yogi but gave it up later because of its rejection in the Adi Granth. He was called back to Ghuman by his father. At the age of fourteen, his father tried to marry him so that he becomes responsible towards family but young Jaimal denied and decided to remain unmarried throughout his life.4

After the death of his father in 1853, he started the search of a spiritual guru. In 1856 at the age of 17, he went to Agra on the advice of a sadhu of Rishikesh (Hardwar); he was initiated in the Radha Soami Faith by Shiv Dayal (Soami Ji). He joined Indian army in Agra on the orders of his guru in 1856, served for 33 years and retired in 1889. Jaimal Singh initiated some persons during his service days on the behalf of his guru Shiv Dayal. In October 1877, Shiv Dayal ordered Jaimal Singh to preach his philosophy at Punjab and gave him his turban and parshad. After the death of his guru in 1878, Jaimal Singh met his guru’s wife Radha (known as mataji among the followers) who reminded him of the orders of his guru; she gave him the shawl of Shiv Dayal whereas Pratap Singh, the younger brother of Shiv Dayal gave him the prayer mat of his guru.5

Jaimal Singh retired as havaldar in 1889 after 33 years of regular service in army. As per the instructions of his guru, Baba Jaimal Singh established his Dera at the bank of River Beas in 1891 and lived there till his death in 1903.6 He was called ‘Babaji’ or ‘Baba Ji Maharaj’ by the followers of Dera Beas (See Appendix-I).

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5 Jaimal Singh, Spiritual Letters, p.xiv; Jaimal Singh joined Indian Army in 1856 and was enlisted in the 24th Sikh Regiment as sepoy stationed then at Agra. He kept on visiting his guru Soami Shiv Dayal at his residence panni gali in Agra. Jaimal Singh was posted at different places like Delhi, Peshawar, Sialkot, Multan, Ambala, Jhansi, Rawalpindi and Mian Mir. In 1875, he was promoted to the rank of nayak and on 1 May 1878, he was promoted to the rank of havaldar. After thirty three years of service, he retired on pension on 18 August 1889, for details see, Kapur, Heaven on Earth, pp. 21-24.
6 Gazetteer of India, Punjab District Gazetteer, Amritsar, 1961, p.91. The term Dera refers to a camp or settlement. While it is used as a place in Punjabi language, where men meet and socialize in the village.
Baba Jaimal Singh remained single throughout his life. His younger brother Jiwan Singh who had also served in army, had one son but he died shortly followed by his mother. His youngest brother Dan Singh remained single throughout his life. Baba Jaimal Singh lived a simple and honest life. No photograph of Baba Jaimal Singh is available. But his simplicity and dedication towards his guru is reflected clearly through his letters written to Sawan Singh and other Beas satsangis, the abstracts of those letters have been published by Dera Beas entitled Spiritual Letters.8

Sawan Singh, the second Dera Beas Master was born on 20 July 1858 at his maternal village, Jatana in Punjab. He belonged to an illustrious Grewal family of the village of Mehmasinghwala, District Ludhiana, Punjab. The child Sawan was named by his grandfather Sher Singh who lived for 115 years and passed away in 1914, when Sawan Singh was 56 years old. His father Kabul Singh was a British Indian Army officer who rose to the post of Subedar Major, the then highest rank given to an Indian in army. His mother Jiwani was a simple kind hearted and affectionate house wife.9

Sawan Singh got his primary education in a school at Narangwal, a mile’s away from his house, thereafter he joined middle school at Gujjerwal, a village about two and a half miles away. He was good at sports, excellent in studies and was sincere and punctual. After early schooling at Narangwal and Gujjerwal, he joined Mission High School at Ludhiana, fourteen miles away from his home, he used to walk from his village to school early on Monday mornings, carried flour, lentils and other provisions for the week and walked back on Saturday evenings (the railway line joining his village with Ludhiana had not yet been laid).

After finishing high school, Sawan Singh looked after the family farm for a while; then worked for a year in the Irrigation Department in the malaria infested district of Rohtak, but had to return home soon as he himself suffered from malaria.

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7 Balwant Singh, The Radha Soami Satsang Beas (Punjab) and its Schismatic Groups, p.49.
9 It is believed that two days after his birth in the month of sawan, his grandfather Sher Singh went to the nearby village of Gujjerwal and asked the Sikh priest to name the child, as was the custom. The priest invoked the blessing of the Lord and opened the Adi Granth, Sawan, the month when the monsoon comes was indicated as the name for the child. Sher Singh felt very happy because he also wanted to name the child Sawan Singh after the month of his birth. It is also believed that on the fifth day of Sawan Singh’s birth, the rain started pouring and continued for the whole month, Kapur, Heaven on Earth, pp.63-64. See also, Glimpses of the Great Master, Pictorial Biography of Sawan Singh, Hong Kong: Troppen Printing Co., p.168.
After recovering, he got a job in the 14th Punjab Regiment carrying forward the family tradition of military service. On the suggestion of his British officers, he enrolled himself at Thomson Engineering College of Roorkee to qualify as an army engineer and received Engineering degree with high grades in 1886. He returned to his regiment and was transferred to the Military Engineering Department.10

At the age of 26, Sawan Singh was married to Kishan Kaur. He had three sons namely Bachint Singh, Basant Singh and Harbans Singh. Throughout his early life and career he had read many scriptures like Adi Granth, Dasam Granth, Ramayana, Mahabharata and Bhagwata Gita etc. The knowledge of Persian helped him to read Persian writings of different scholars.11 While in service, Sawan Singh met Baba Jaimal Singh on the Muree Hills, he was initiated in Radha Soami Faith by him on 15 October 1894 after attending his discourse for three or four days. Two years later, in 1896, Baba Jaimal Singh initiated his family members and some of his friends at his village Mehmasinghwala.12

It is said that after accepting Baba Jaimal Singh as his spiritual Master, Sawan Singh started giving one tenth of his salary at Dera Beas for langar but after a while he started sending his entire salary to him, Baba Jaimal Singh used to return him an amount sufficient for livelihood of his family.13 In 1903, he was appointed as the spiritual Master of Beas by his guru Jaimal Singh before his death. The formal ceremony of installing Sawan Singh as the guru of Dera Beas was performed with

10 Kapur, Heaven on Earth, pp.66-68.
11 Sawan Singh acquired a good understanding of the Sikh, Hindu and Sufi philosophies due to his contacts with many Yogis, Vedantists, Buddhists, Jain, priests, Christian clergymen besides Saint Kahan Singh with whom he discussed mysticism. He studied Qur’an and books of different scholars like Shams-I-Fabriz, Maulana Rum, Khwaja Hafiz, Amir Khusro and other Sufi saints. His early copy of the Adi Granth has a blank page opposite each page of text where in places he wrote explanations of these passages along with analytical comments as well as his own views. He studied Vedas, Upanishads, Gita, Yog Vashist and other Hindu sacred writings. He discussed Bible with a clergyman and Buddhism and Jainism with a Buddhist priest. Sawan Singh often used to attend religious gatherings and had worked as President and Secretary of religious societies before he was installed as spiritual Master of Dera Beas. He used to say that he was willing to sit at the feet of the lowest of the low castes if only he could learn how to obtain the spiritual treasure. In 1891, at Muree Hills, he rented a house near an inn where Hindu pilgrims used to stay during their pilgrimage to Amarnath with whom he discussed spiritual matters. For details see, Kapur, Heaven on Earth, pp.70-72. See also, David Christopher Lane, Enchanted Land-A Journey with the Saints of India, Walnut (California): The MSAC Philosophy Group, 1995, p.18.
quite dignity, he was offered Soami Shiv Dayal’s turban and shawl as a token of the responsibility conferred on him.  

Sawan Singh continued his job for next eight years to qualify the terms of pension and then got retirement in 1911 to focus completely on his duties as spiritual Master of Dera Beas. He remained the spiritual Master of Beas till his death in 1948. By his followers, Sawan Singh is addressed as the Great Master, Hazur Maharaj Ji and Maharaj Ji (See Appendix-I).  

Third Dera Beas Master Jagat Singh was born on 27 July, 1884 in Nussi, a village in Jullundur District of Punjab. His father Bhola Singh was a prosperous land owner and was from one of the most respected families in that area. Nand Kaur, the mother of child Jagat died when he was five years old; therefore he was brought up by his father’s aunt. His education began with a priest of the local gurudwara in Punjabi language. Later he joined Mission School in Jullundhur, where he excelled in sports like hockey and tennis as well as academics. He did M. Sc. (Master of Science) in Chemistry from Government College, Lahore. In the college, he was addressed as Guruji by his friends due to his qualities like discipline, simplicity, humility, and a subtle sense of humor. After receiving his Master’s degree, he remained in same college as a research scholar. He was offered the teaching job by the Principal of Government Agricultural College, Lyallpur during his visit as an examiner for practical, Jagat Singh accepted this proposal and started his teaching career at Lyallpur in 1911. He continued his hobby of playing hockey and led the Lyallpur hockey team a number of times.  

Jagat Singh was religious minded since his childhood, he frequently went with his father to meet holy men visiting their village. He came into contact with Baba Sawan Singh through his cousin Bhagat Singh and Munshi Ram at Abbotabad (Pakistan) and was initiated in 1910. In his early teens, Jagat Singh was engaged to Sada Kaur. After the completion of his education and beginning of his career, he

14 Kapur, Heaven on Earth, p.88.  
became disinterested in leading a family life and refused to get married but was persuaded by Baba Sawan Singh to do so. He had only one son from the marriage.  

Contemplative by nature, Jagat Singh tried to mould his life according to his ideals. He was very simple and a man of few words. He was strict as well as loving in dealing with his students; therefore he was always respected by his superiors, colleagues, and subordinates. Due to his extra ordinary qualities, the British Government honored him with the title of ‘Sardar Bahadur.’ Jagat Singh became a member of the University Military Training Corps and accompanied the trainees for their fifteen days training camp every year. Due to his dedication towards his job, he earned respect and admiration of his British bosses Dr. Barnes, Mr. Milne and Dr. Lander.

After thirty two years of service in the college, he retired in July 1943 on pension at the age of 59 and settled in Dera Beas. During his service days, he used to visit Beas on weekends where he handled correspondence with foreign devotees of his guru along with his colleague Professor Jagmohan Lal. In addition, Baba Sawan Singh made him in charge of running the langar. Besides, he performed the duty of

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17 Kapur, _Heaven on Earth_, pp.216-17.
18 It is believed that Jagat Singh had little interest in money and wealth since beginning and was completely indifferent to worldly objects. His share of the income from the family farm and other properties, a substantial income of thousands of rupees went directly to his brother Bhagat Singh, who spent it himself as he thought fit. Jagat Singh used to hand over his salary to his friend Pandit Lal Chand for household expenses and to help needy students, he devoted his free time to meditation. After his retirement, he deposited the money received from provident fund through a clerk to the account of his brother. Later, when the clerk told his brother Bhagat Singh about it, he was deeply moved. See for details, Kapur, _Heaven on Earth_, p.216; Shanti Sethi, _Treasure beyond Measure_, Beas: Radha Soami Satsang Beas, 1991, p.48. See also, In the Footsteps of the Master, _Pictorial Biography of Baba Jagat Singh_, p.13.
19 Kapur, _Heaven on Earth_, p. 225.
20 Ibid., p.229.
21 Science of the Soul, RSSB Magazine. Vol.19, No.4, December 1981, p.42; Some appreciation reports have been given in his pictorial biography published by the centre with the name of In the Footsteps of the Master, prepared by some of his British superiors, for instance, the Director of Agriculture made statement about his honesty, “A quiet and efficient worker who has a strong controlling influence among staff and students of the institute. He has been a great asset to the Department.” Besides, in a report of 19th July 1943, one of his officers wrote, “He has been a pillar of the College for over 30 years and will be greatly missed when he leaves it on retirement in the course of the next few months. Few officers have had such a consistently fine record of service”. For more details see, In the Footsteps of the Master, _Pictorial Biography of Baba Jagat Singh_, pp.24-25.
22 The way he retired was characteristic of his simplicity. When the students and the staff were preparing to give him a hearty send off to this inscrutable person who inspired them so much, quietly took his belongings and all unsuspected, slipped to Beas by the back door to his house. For more details see, Radha Soami Greetings, RSSB Magazine, February 1975, p.20; See also, Kapur, _Heaven on Earth_, p. 229.
1, Sawan Singh, son of Sardar Kabul Singh, caste Grewal Jat, Gaddi Nasheen (Present Master at the Spiritual Centre) of Dera Baba Jaimal Singh, in the Tehsil and District of Amritsar, do hereby make the following Will: Before this, wills concerning my private properties and that of Satsang properties, have been made by me, but up to this time I have not nominated any person to succeed me as the Gaddi Nasheen (Spiritual Head) of the Dera. So, now, in my full senses and with my free will, I do hereby appoint Sardar Bahadur Jagat Singh, M.A., Retired Professor, Agricultural College, Lyalipur, as my successor at Dera Baba Jaimal Singh and all the Satsangs connected with it. After me he will perform all the acts and duties that I have been performing so far.

In witness thereof, I made this will to be of use when needed.

Dera Baba Jaimal Singh,  
Dated 20th March, 1948  

Witness  
Bachint Singh  
(Eldest son of the Great Master)  

Signature of the testator  
SAWAN SINGH  

Witness  
Charan Singh  
(Advocate)
Beas preacher and gave many satsangs in Lyallpur on the order of his Master. But Jagat Singh never gave a discourse at Dera Beas because of his unwillingness to sit on the dais at the same level of his Master. It is noteworthy that Jagat Singh was from Sikh family but he was clean shaven before settling at Dera, however, he grew beard after he settled there permanently.

On 20 March 1948, Baba Sawan Singh nominated Jagat Singh, as his successor through a written will. Interestingly he was the first guru to write a will, others did the same. In fact, Baba Jagat Singh was not in favor of accepting the seat of his Master; he accepted the position only after Baba Sawan Singh ordered him strictly to do so. Baba Jagat Singh was formally installed on gurgaddi of Dera Beas on 13 April 1948 in the presence of Baba Sawan Singh’s family besides Deva Singh, the then spiritual guru of Dera Radha Swami, Tarn Taran; Secretary of Radha Soami Satsang Dayal Bagh, Agra and Namdharis’ guru Pratap Singh. The last will of the Dera Master was read by Secretary before the installation of Baba Jagat Singh as Dera guru. The turban and shawl of Soami Shiv Dayal were given to him by Bachint Singh, the eldest son of Sawan Singh.

Dastarbandhi of Jagat Singh

23 Kapur, Heaven on Earth, p.220. See, In the Footsteps of the Master, Pictorial Biography of Baba Jagat Singh, p.16.
24 Ibid., p.231. See also, Spiritual Link, RSSB Magazine, July 1980, p.21.
26 Kapur, Heaven on Earth, p. 233.
He performed his duties as Dera Master for next three and half years and died on 23 of October 1951 after nominating Sardar Charan Singh as his successor. Baba Jagat Singh is usually called Sardar Bahadur Ji Maharaj by his followers (See Appendix-I).

Baba Charan Singh, the fourth Dera Beas Master was born on 12 December, 1916, at his maternal home in Moga. His father Harbans Singh was the youngest of the three sons of second Beas Master Baba Sawan Singh. Charan Singh was the eldest of seven children (three boys and four girls) of his parents and was called by his nick name ‘Charani’. However, Baba Jagat Singh, the third Dera Beas Master, called him ‘chowdhry’. When child Charan was only three years old, he was sent to his grandfather Baba Sawan Singh at Dera Beas while his parents stayed at Sikanderpur. The early life of Charan Singh differs from his predecessors because of his closeness to Dera Beas since his childhood. Ralli, better known Bibi Ralli, one of Sawan Singh’s female disciples looked after him during his childhood days, therefore, he called her ‘Bhua Ji’ (Aunt) out of love and respect.

Charan Singh got his primary education at village Balsarai, about a mile away from Dera Beas and attended High School at Baba Bakala, three miles away from Dera. On 30 January 1933, at the age of seventeen, young Charan Singh was initiated in Radha Soami Faith by Baba Sawan Singh. It is noteworthy that Charan Singh was involved in Dera activities since his childhood. He completed his B. A. (Bachelor of...
Dear Baba Jumun Singh,

Best, 11.09.51

To S. Chown Singh ji:

As stated,

Sardar Bakhadarji would wish to exchange some accounts in your given name please put your signatures on the enclosed form at all the places marked X and return them to me at an early date under registered postal cover.

All well at the Deraw.

Durgan Mohan D. Singh, S. Bhakhart Singh

He returned from St. Thomas.

Yours Affectionately

Mushtah Khan

Secretary.
WILL OF MAHARAJ SARDAR BAHADUR JAGAT SINGH JI  

DATED THE 22ND OCTOBER 1951

I, Sardar Bahadur Jagat Singh, sb Sardar Bhola Singh, caste Jat Sikh, Spiritual Head of Dera Baba Jaimal Singh, Tehsil and District Ainritsar, do hereby declare that I am seriously ill these days and there is no knowing how long I shall live, wherefore, being in full possession of my senses and of my own free will and consent, I make this Will.

That so long as I am alive, I shall be the absolute owner of the Dera Baba Jaimal Singh and all the properties appertaining thereto. After me, Sardar Charan Singh Grewal, sb Sardar Harbans Singh Grewal, caste Jat Sikh, resident of Sikanderpur, Tehsil Sirsa, District Hisar, will be the Spiritual Head of Dera Baba Jaimal Singh, and will be the sole and absolute owner of all properties, movable and immovable, cash, deposits in the Banks, and all the Satsang Ghars attached to the Dera Baba Jaimal Singh in the same manner in which the late Baba Sawan Singh Ji and myself have been their owners. However, this Will will not affect in any way my personal and ancestral properties. Hence I have executed this Will to serve as a record of my intentions.

I also declare that Sardar Charan Singh will also hold Satsangs and bestow initiation as I had been doing.

Scribe
(Sd.) Munshi Ram,  
Secretary, Dera.  
22-10-1951

(Sd.) JAGAT SINGH  
22-10-1951

I certify that testator S. B. Jagat Singh has been for the last one month and still is under my treatment and that he is in the full possession of his senses at this time.

D/- 22nd October 1951

Balwant Singh, F.R.C.S.  
Retired Chief Medical Officer,  
Kashmir.

Lalchand Dharmani, P.A.-S.,  
Agricultural Chemist II, Punjab,  
on leave at Dera.

Gurdial Singh,  
Notary Public,  
Jullundur, 22-10-51

Bachint Singh Grewal  
22-10-51

Witnesses

Daryalal Kapur,  
Ex-Finance Secretary  
Kapurthala Government,  
at present at Dera.  
22-10-1951
Arts) from Gorden College, Rawalpindi in 1938 and received his L.L.B. (Bachelor of Law) degree from Punjab University, Lahore in 1942. 32 During his college days, Charan Singh was a good player of Tennis. 33 He began practicing law at Sirsa and Hisar and was recognized as one of the top-ranking lawyers in his area due to his sincerity and uprightness. He was the first Sikh lawyer who joined the bar, though there was a considerable number of Sikh population around Sirsa. 34

On 25 November 1944, he was married to Harjeet, daughter of Rao Sahib Shiv Dhyan Singh, a Hindu Rajput devotee of Sawan Singh and a landlord of Pisawah, Uttar Pradesh. 35 Charan Singh had a daughter and two sons. 36 In 1947, Charan Singh was offered a gazetted post (as a Judge) in the judiciary. But he was not allowed by Baba Sawan Singh to join the post, who instructed him to help his father in agricultural works. Charan Singh’s law career was cut short; he gave up the practice of law and started helping his father at his farms and sugar factory at Sikanderpur (now in Haryana). 37 He remained involved in these works till 1951, the year of his succession as Beas guru.

Before preparing his will in favour of Charan Singh, Baba Jagat Singh had also opened a joint account with him (See letter dt.22-9-1951). 38 It is pertinent to note that like Baba Jagat Singh, even Charan Singh was not willing to accept the responsibility of Dera Master. He was installed on gurgaddi on 4 November 1951 in the presence of Namdhari guru Pratap Singh of Bhaini Sahib, Baba Deva Singh of Dera Radha Swami, Tarn Taran and a few other holy men. After reading the will of previous Master, he was offered Soami Shiv Dayal’s turban by his uncle Bachint Singh who had offered the turban to Baba Jagat Singh also. 39 He was addressed by his used to service of carry bags of wheat, flour, and pulse, or serving food and water to the sangat at Dera langar. For more details see, Kapur, Heaven on Earth, pp.265-70.
33 Ibid., p.20.
34 Kapur, Heaven on Earth, pp.271; Sethi, Treasure beyond Measure, p.133.
35 Kapur, Heaven on Earth, pp.272-73.
36 Ibid., p.281.
37 Kapur, Heaven on Earth, p.274.
38 At the time of the death of Baba Jagat Singh, Charan Singh was not present there. Therefore, a telegram was sent to him to come to Dera Beas. But he could reach after the cremation of the previous Master, Kapur, Heaven on Earth, p.251. See also, Radha Soami Satsang Beas-Origin and Growth, 1973, p.5.
39 Sethi, Tresure beyond Measure, p.283
followers as Hazur, Hazur Maharaj, and Maharaj Ji out of their love and respect (See Appendix-I).

Dastarbandhi of Charan Singh

Not much information available about the earlier life of present Beas Master Baba Gurinder Singh. He was born at Sirsa (at present in Haryana) on 1 August, 1954. He is the eldest son of Gurmukh Singh Dhillon and Mohinder Kaur, the sister of Baba Charan Singh. Like the other Masters of Beas, his family belongs to a traditional agricultural community of Punjab. Gurinder got his school education from Lawrence School of Sanawar and completed his B.Com (Bachelor of Commerce) from Panjab University, Chandigarh. Like his predecessors, he had strong spiritual leanings and tendencies for self purification and God realization since his childhood, therefore, he was initiated into the fold of the Radha Soami Path by his maternal uncle and the then Dera Beas Master Baba Charan Singh in October, 1978.

At the age of thirty five, Gurinder Singh was nominated as the spiritual Head of Dera Beas by the last will of Baba Charan Singh. It is important to note here that Charan Singh had two sons but none of them was appointed to be his successor. Gurinder Singh was then staying in Spain and was handling affairs of the satsang centre at Malaga before his installation as Beas guru. Baba Gurinder Singh was installed on gurgaddi on 10 June 1990 in the presence of Baba Charan Singh’s family. The traditional ‘Dastarbandi’ ceremony was performed, he was offered the shawl of

I, S. Charan Singh Grewal, M/o
S. Harbhans Singh Grewal, aged 74 years
am making this will in regard to the
spiritual affairs of the Society, Radha Soami
Sab sect, while in full possession of
my will.

I am making this will in accordance
with the wishes of Hazur Maharaj Baba Saw
Singh JI, my predecessor. I have
served the Sangar with whole-hearted devotion
for nearly forty years. I have
received great measure of love, respect
and esteem of the entire Sangar, of which
and my staff members of which it would
be difficult to find a parallel in the world.
I am deeply grateful for their Co-operation
and support.

I appoint Sh. GurINDER Singh Dhillon,
S/o Sh. Gummit Singh Dhillon, as the
Sangar Manager as per the sauce of
Hazur Maharaj Baba Sawan Singh JI, and
He shall be the same as well as the
Patron of Radha Soami Sabha and
will have the authority of giving initiation
(NAH). He will also be the Patron of
Harmandir Jagat Singh Hospital Relief Society.

I have made this will in accordance
with the wishes of Hazur Maharaj Baba
Sawan Singh Ji, and I have every
hope that my wishes as expressed in this
will be duly honoured by the entire Sangar,
all my family members and members of the
Society.

Witnessed by:
1. Sur Singh
2. Jatinder

Sanad of 305/73

V. B. S. & D. B. of Radh Soami Singh
Baba Jaimal Singh and Baba Charan Singh’s turban by his uncle Capt. Parshotam Singh Grewal.

From 1990 to 2010, the period of proposed study, Baba Gurinder Singh has completed 20 years of his mastership at Dera Beas and is continuing till date. By his followers, Baba Gurinder Singh is addressed as Baba Ji (See Appendix-I)

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II

Baba Jaimal Singh lived for a while in his village Ghuman after his retirement from army in 1889, and then settled for meditation at a lonely, deserted place between the villages of Waraich and Balsarai on the western bank of the River Beas in 1891. At that time this was a lonely place, uninhabited wildness of scrub land and ravines. Baba Jaimal Singh built a mud hut for himself. A few people from nearby villages started visiting to listen his satsang, however their number was quite small as 4 to 5

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43 Sethi, Treasure beyond Measure, p.283.
44 Gurinder Singh was also called Hazur Maharaj in the beginning years of Mastership but he instructed his followers to call him Baba Ji rather Hazur Maharaj which was to be used for Charan Singh. See, Science of the Soul, RSSB Magazine, December 1996, p.5.
46 Jaimal Singh, Spiritual Letters, pp.xiv-xxv.
47 Legacy of Love, Pictorial Biography of Charan Singh, p.70.
and occasionally 8 to 10 only. The gathering of monthly *satsangs* was limited to 30 to 50 people only.48

The constructions at Beas are believed to have begun when Sawan Singh started coming to Beas to attend the *satsangs* of his spiritual guru Baba Jaimal Singh. Sawan Singh constructed a small hall of 30 feet × 15 feet to cater to the need of *sangat* at Dera in 1898 on the instructions of his guru. The main purpose of this construction was to use it as *satsang* hall as well as to accommodate visitors.49 Gradually, the *sangat* began to grow; Sawan Singh got permission from Jaimal Singh to build a large *satsang* hall.50 The new *satsang* hall of 55 feet × 20 feet was completed in April/May 1903. Baba Jaimal Singh held only one *satsang* there and used mostly the smaller hall as it was sufficient to accommodate 200 persons who had been visiting Dera Beas devotees on Sunday *satsangs*.51

Since the number of visitors at Dera Beas started increasing, Baba Sawan Singh built big *satsang* hall called ‘Baba Jaimal Singh Hall’ to accommodate 10,000 people in *bhandara satsangs*. On 30 September 1934, he himself laid the foundation of this hall and carried first five baskets of earth to fill the foundation. A marble box was also placed in the foundation trench, containing the book *Sar Bachan Poetry* of Shiv Dayal alias Soamiji and a note giving a brief history of Dera Beas. At the end of the note, he had put his signature after writing the word “approved” and laid the bricks around the marble box.52

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50 Jaimal Singh, *Spiritual Letters*, pp.102-03.
51 It is believed that when disciples asked Jaimal Singh to give the *satsangs* at new *satsang* hall, he replied, “Baba Sawan Singh will deliver discourses here now”. For details see, Kapur, *Heaven on Earth*, pp.53-54.
Sawan Singh keeping foundation stone of Baba Jaimal Singh Hall

Baba Sawan Singh was an efficient and experienced engineer; this T-shaped structured Satsang Hall with dimensions of 40 feet x 120 feet is considered as one of the architectural, beautiful and majestic spiritual, buildings of Northern India especially of Punjab. The entire design and plan for this Satsang Hall was prepared by Baba Sawan Singh himself. Adorned with well proportioned minarets and crowned with golden spires, the building combines both medieval and classical styles. At that time, the total cost of Satsang Hall was 2 lac rupees.\(^5\)

Baba Jaimal Singh Hall (Old Satsang Ghar)

Before this hall was completed in 1937, the attendance at bhandara and monthly satsangs had increased to over 20 thousand people. Instead of constructing

another hall, Baba Sawan Singh decided to give discourses in the open fields whenever there was shortage of space.54

Baba Jagat Singh continued addressing satsangs there like his guru and did not make any addition. But as the number of sangat of Dera Beas increased rapidly during the period of Baba Charan Singh, he started the construction of another satsang hall compound to accommodate increased number of devotees on monthly satsangs and bhandaras. In 1955, the large attendance at the April and July bhandaras necessitated the shifting of satsang outside the satsang hall compound.55 Baba Charan Singh got levelled the uneven ground to the south of the satsang hall through mitti-ki-seva and enabled it for 2 lac people to attend satsang, four adjacent acres were leveled and added later within four to five years. The ground was enlarged again by the acquisition of 8 acres of land for bhandara satsangs in 1983 to accommodate 2 to 3 lacs satsangis. This became permanent satsang ground for bhandaras and monthly satsangs during the period of Baba Charan Singh.56

54 Excerpts from an interview of an old female initiate of Sawan Singh named Joginder Kumari of Kalka on 22nd September 2011.
Baba Gurinder Singh after his installation on gurugaddi in 1990 realizing the need of the sangat, constructed a new satsang shed (beside the ring road, extending from Gate No. 8 to Gate No. 9 of Dera Beas) to enable large crowd of over 5 lacs to attend bhandara satsangs via ring road, without entering the main Dera grounds. Till 1996, the area of new satsang shed was about 2,300 feet long and 1,000 feet wide. This shed is one of the largest covered structures in Asia, designed and fabricated on site using a lightweight space frame technology. At present, this shed is used for the bhandara satsangs whereas the satsang is performed in the old satsang shed in normal days which is called as Satsang Pandal No.1 which had been remodelled, the new satsang shed is called Satsang Pandal No.2.

The construction of different satsang sheds and pandals at Dera Beas indicate the growth of this centre and the increasing number of devotees. It is noteworthy that the strength of the followers on weekly satsangs of Baba Jaimal Singh was only a few hundreds. It reached up to thousands during the period of Baba Sawan Singh and up to one lac under Baba Jagat Singh. During the period of Baba Charan Singh, the bhandara gathering was two to three lacs and has increased to 5 to 6 lacs during the period of Baba Gurinder Singh, the strength is still increasing.58

During the early days of establishment of Dera Beas, Baba Jaimal Singh used to stay in a small mud hut of 8 feet × 8 feet and barely 8 ½ feet high near the Beas River, a room that could be described as a type of large cave as protection against the vagaries of the weather and provided a quiet spot where he could sit in meditation as long as he was pleased.59 Rukko, better known Bibi Rukko, the attendant of Baba Jaimal Singh lived and prepared meals for him in another hut. There were no proper arrangements for visitors to stay. In winter, they used to spread straw or reeds on the ground and the sheets or thin cotton carpets to make beds. Sometimes, visitors used to sleep in the neighboring villages or in small improvised caves that they had hollowed out in the sandy ravines that abounded the area.60

Whenever Sawan Singh used to come to Dera Beas, Baba Jaimal Singh lodged him in his own hut. Therefore, Sawan Singh persuaded his guru to allow the thatched hut to be turned into a permanent room. The length and breadth of the room were kept practically the same, and ceiling height was increased only by a few feet. The thatched walls were replaced with bricks laid in yellow earth and plastered with mud. Another room was built by the side of Bibi Rukko’s hut. In 1898, a small hall of 30 feet × 15 feet was built by Sawan Singh to use it for accommodation of devotees as well as satsangs. As the sangat of Dera Beas increased, Sawan Singh constructed a double storied building having 5 rooms on the ground floor and 4 rooms on the first floor in 1900 with the permission of Baba Jaimal Singh.61 The Government officials and educated devotees used to stay in those rooms. Since there were no bathrooms,

58 Legacy of Love, Pictorial Biography of Charan Singh, p.279; Personal Visits to Dera Beas (2010).
59 Kapur, Heaven on Earth, p. 27.
60 Ibid., p. 48.
61 After the construction of few rooms, Sawan Singh still used to sleep in the room of his master Jaimal Singh. After the death of his master, he used the room for meditation only and not for sleeping, for more details, Kapur, Heaven on Earth, pp.50-51.
the sangat used to take bath in the river Beas, which was so close. There was no electricity; lanterns, small oil lamps and candles were used to dispel the darkness. The visitors who came generally for a few days of satsang stayed wherever they could find space — in the satsang hall, the initiation hall, doorways, and verandas.62

In 1911, after the retirement of Baba Sawan Singh, the building activity at Beas received a new impetus. Though the Dera was founded by Baba Jaimal Singh, the chief architect of its real growth was believed to be Baba Sawan Singh.63 Many buildings were constructed during his tenure to use for different purposes as per requirement. He allowed a number of disciples to make houses at Dera Beas which were also used to accommodate people. Most of them belonged to Lahore, therefore their homes were known as Lahorian di Kothi. Besides, a number of quarters were constructed with straw roofs called chappars to accommodate sangat. A building was constructed near the Beas station at village Buddha Theh called kothi house for providing short stay to visitors at night.64

As the sangat increased, Dera Masters constructed more buildings. In 1954-55, Baba Charan Singh established Sadhu Ashram, a double storied building having 150 rooms on the lines of the Agra centre of Radha Soamis for those who wanted to meditate in solitude at Dera Beas.65 Till 1980s, he had constructed more than 25 accommodation sheds having toilets with modern amenities; each shed had different capacity to accommodate people.66 Among them, a Multi Purpose (M P) shed was constructed near langar in 1983-84 which was ranked as one of the biggest and finest of its kind in India at that time with the floor area of 2,71,026 square feet having capacity to accommodate 20,000 persons approximately. This shed had a wide verandah of 540 feet × 450 feet to provide sleeping accommodation for 25,000

62 Ibid., p.100-01.
63 Ibid., p.149.
64 Excerpts of an interview of one of the old satsangi named Pakher Ram, a contemporary of Baba Sawan Singh on 15th July 2013. The kothi house near the Beas railway station is now used as the residential quarters of the persons working in the Electricity Department of Dera Beas Electricity Sub Station.
65 About the construction of Sadhu Ashram, it is believed that once Baba Charan Singh visited the ravines in which many small caves had been excavated and where sadhus used to stay. It had rained heavily and a lot of rain water had entered the caves. Therefore the sadhus were living in great discomfort. Seeing their plight, he was greatly moved and he thought of building some rooms for them, situated on the west of the satsang ghar, for more details, see, Sethi, Treasure beyond Measure, pp.6-7.
persons. In addition, a Ladies Shed was constructed especially to accommodate women devotees having a capacity of 20,000 people. These vast covered sheds were designed and fabricated basically from an open steel skeleton with a light weight roof and open sides. The sides were then partially built in, with bricks and cement lattice screens, to enclose the structure.\textsuperscript{67} Besides the sheds, Baba Charan Singh built two \textit{sarais} having a number of sheds called ‘Maharaj Sawan Singh Sarai’ and ‘Maharaj Jagat Singh Sarai’, these sheds had halls as well as rooms to accommodate people.\textsuperscript{68}

The number of sheds in the \textit{sarais} increased as the \textit{sangat} increased, for example to extend the Maharaj Sawan Singh Sarai, 8 sheds were constructed in 1987, consisting of two halls each of 60 feet $\times$ 30 feet, on the ground floor and one large hall, 120 feet $\times$ 30 feet on the upper floor having a water tank and a septic tank.\textsuperscript{69} It is important to note that both these \textit{sarais} were also used as different wards for patients during Dera eye camps organized in the months of October-November every year. Hundreds of \textit{shamiyanas} and tents were erected during \textit{bhandaras} if the existing accommodation did not suffice.\textsuperscript{70}

Baba Gurinder Singh added new structures and remodeled some old buildings. He added one \textit{sarai}. Three \textit{sarais} which are there called presently as Sarai No. 1, Sarai No. 2 and Sarai No.3. Nearly 20 Sheds are available in each \textit{sarai}. Each shed has one hall (upper floor) having capacity of 400 persons and four to seven rooms (on ground floor) having capacity of 50 persons each. Most of the old sheds were demolished and some old have been remodeled. A chain of the accommodation sheds of same size was started by Baba Gurinder Singh. By 2010, 10 sheds having capacity of about 10,000 each have been completed. The old Ladies Shed has been converted into an open shed called \textit{Hawa Ghar}. The noteworthy thing is that new sheds are generally called by numbers instead of different names as was the practice before.\textsuperscript{71}


\textsuperscript{69} Radha Soami Greetings, RSSB Magazine, Summary (Report 1987), Summer 1988, p.46.


\textsuperscript{71} Personal Visit to Dera Beas (2012).
Till 1951, there was only one guest house having four bedrooms only to accommodate the foreign devotees of Beas. In 1955, a small annex, having three rooms and two bathrooms, was added to accommodate the growing number of visitors. Indumati Rajwade, one of the Dera devotees gave her house, called Rani ki Kothi to use as the guest house for foreign devotees. But after Baba Charan Singh undertook foreign tours in 1960, the number of Dera devotees from abroad began to grow rapidly and they started visiting Dera Beas every year. To fulfill the need of their accommodation, a two-storied guest house of 37 rooms was built by Baba Charan Singh in 1965. The prominent features of this building were a reception lounge on the ground floor, a meeting hall on the upper floor of 150 seating capacity, a kitchen and a dining hall to provide meals. In its meeting hall, Baba Charan Singh held daily meetings with guests from abroad, gave discourses and answered their questions.

73 Like all other building projects at the Dera, Baba Charan Singh supervised the plan for this building and all the details of its construction. The laying of the roof terrace on the new guest house in July 1965 was an example of the way he inspired the sangat to do seva. The engineers wanted the entire roof to be laid in a single day in a continuous process, so that the concrete would mature into one joint less block. At 7:00 A.M. the day the work was to be done, he gave a fifteen-minute discourse and then called the sangat for help in laying the roof. The seva began at 7:30 in the morning and continued until 3:00 in the afternoon without any break not even for lunch. He remained present throughout. After the roof was successfully laid, he had food brought from the langar, asked the sangat to be seated, and served chapattis to them with his own hands. Only after the sangat had finished eating, he went to his house for lunch, around 4:00 in the afternoon, For more details, Kapur, *Heaven on Earth*, pp.380-81.
In 1966, 28 to 30 foreigners visited Dera Beas to attend discourses of the Master, the number increased to 197 in 1968. Therefore the guest house proved to be insufficient. Till 1970, there were around 200 devotees from over 70 countries visiting Dera every year. In 1977, there were 423 foreigners, in 1978, 491 and in 1979, 543. Baba Charan Singh started 2 new buildings in the guest house complex, and provided 45 additional rooms. In 1983, there were 694 foreigners but in 1984, the number decreased to 372 due to the disturbed conditions in Punjab. The Punjab Government had banned the entry of foreigners in Punjab, it lifted the ban in March 1989. In 1987, Baba Charan Singh built another hostel in the compound adjoining the International Guest House, having capacity of 300 guests. A total of 1,137 foreigners visited Beas in 1992 from 46 countries during the period of Baba Gurinder Singh. The latest figure of 2008 is 1,659.

Baba Gurinder Singh remodeled old hostels, and constructed new to accommodate NRI’s as well as foreigners. During the last twenty years, the number of hostels has reached to eleven, for instance, he constructed Hostel No.3, 4, 5 in 1990, Hostel No. 10 and 11 in 2005-2006 and Hostel No.8 in 2007; he remodeled Hostel no.6 in 1995. At present, Dera Beas has 11 hostels having capacity of 700 to 800

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people each, they can accommodate nearly 8,000 devotees. Hostel No. 6, called International Guest House, is exclusively for visitors from other countries.

Before 1951, only a few sewadars (volunteers) lived permanently at Dera Beas to look after different works. However, there was no arrangement for their accommodation; the sewadar in charge could allot or deny, at his discretion. There was a lack of civic amenities; people usually went to the river bed for toilet and to bath with the water brought up from a well operated by a Persian wheel. There was no electricity, and no sewage system in the Dera. That is why Baba Charan Singh constructed small houses with modern facilities to attract good sewadars to stay permanently.

Since 1955, different types of houses have been constructed according to international standards. Baba Charan Singh built large numbers of one, two, and three bedroom houses with all amenities like fans, electricity, running water, flush toilets, a courtyard, a lawn, a large kitchen area, a verandah, and open space. The two and three room quarters have well-maintained lawns in front and open space in the rear. The houses have been permanently protected from flies and mosquitoes by wire netted swing doors, in addition to the usual ones. The windows have been similarly wired. The ventilation is excellent; the rooms are commodious without being wasteful and the designs are artistic without ornamentation. All houses are connected by broad roads.

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77 Radha Soami Greetings, RSSB Magazine, Spring 1994, p.30; Radha Soami Satsang Beas Archival Records; Personal visit to Dera Beas (2013)
78 Sethi, Treasure Beyond Measure, p.3.
79 Ibid., p.8.
and are interspersed with open grassy areas. These houses are allotted to old satsangis and permanent sewadars at the Dera (See Appendix-II).

Baba Gurinder Singh continued the construction work of residential quarters, he remodeled most of the old quarters in a uniform manner and the work is still continuing. During the last twenty years, a number of residential quarters have been constructed and allotted to the sewadars of Dera Beas. A to R type quarters have been completed till date and the work of other quarters is continuing, there are about 200 to 300 quarters available in each type. The features of these quarters are the same as mentioned above. Baba Charan Singh had provided space to open the shops of tailor, shoe maker, laundry and hair dresser to cater to the needs of Dera residents. Baba Gurinder Singh shifted these shops to another place near Hostel No. 10 and 11. But it is noteworthy that these shops are for Dera residents only. Due to the efforts of Baba Charan Singh and Baba Gurinder Singh, a good number of sewadars have settled here permanently, the total population of the Dera Beas was 1,349 in 1981 which increased to 1,822 in 1991. At present, the number of resident sewadars at Dera Beas has reached up to 6,000.

Residential Quarters

81 Personal Visits to Dera Beas (2011)
83 http://www.rssb.org/dera.php
After the permanent settlement at Beas in 1911, Baba Sawan Singh constructed his own residence called *Kothi* consisting of many rooms near the hut of his guru Baba Jaimal Singh. The rooms were redesigned by Baba Charan Singh and later by Baba Gurinder Singh. Recently a wall has been constructed around the entire area by Baba Gurinder Singh to prevent devotees to bow before his *kothi*.84

The *kothi* during the times of Baba Sawan Singh (left) and Baba Charan Singh (right)

Since the early days of Dera Beas, the *langar* has been an important institution of this centre. During the initial years of Dera at Beas, due to less number of visitors, about 30 pounds of cereal and sugar were sufficient to prepare *parshad*. The number of devotees reached up to 200 in the monthly *satsangs* during the last years of Baba Jaimal Singh so the need of *langar* increased.85 His personal attendant Bibi Rukko was made responsible for making arrangements of *langar* for visitors as well as her guru.86 Sawan Singh, the disciple of Baba Jaimal Singh, used to send produce like wheat, corn and other grains from his farms in Mehmasinghswala as well as Sirsa in the *langar* regularly.87

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84 All Beas Masters taught to prefer teachings of saints rather than to bow towards Dera buildings by visitors as usual they do. Therefore, Baba Gurinder Singh constructed a boundary wall.
87 Ibid, pp.83-84
When Baba Sawan Singh was installed on gurgaddi, his main priority was to continue the langar at Beas. As the sangat increased, the number of people who took their meals reached to thousands on bhandaras. To fulfill the supply of flour, Baba Sawan Singh constructed flour mill at Dera Beas. There was a major difficulty to get fuel for langar in those days and sewadars usually had to go to opposite side of the river in boats to collect grass and reeds for Beas langar as they grew only on the opposite bank. Crossing the river frequently was difficult because of the swift current and stormy weather, and often the sewadars who went to collect the reeds would return late in the evening, sometimes as late as 11:00 at night. Sawan Singh used to wait for their safe return, not retiring even if it was midnight. Gradually, the river began shifting and the reeds and other thick grasses used for fuel grew on the Dera side of the river also, therefore, crossing the river was no more required.

Dera Beas langar took a new shape under Baba Charan Singh. The main problem at that time was lack of discipline. People used to take meals as well as utensils to their houses, as a result Dera had to face shortage of utensils. To overcome this problem, Baba Charan Singh made announcements in his satsangs that devotees would be required to eat langar there only and denied food to be taken outside the langar building. He also started visiting langar daily to inspect the situation. The second change, he brought was to merge two langars into one. Actually, before his succession, there were two langars one for the upper class and another for lower class. In July 1952, Baba Charan Singh made an announcement in his satsang regarding merger of two langars into one. (this point has been discussed in detail in Chapter 5).

Baba Charan Singh took steps to expand the area of langar to overcome the problem of shortage of space. He planned to enlarge langar towards East where there

89 Sewadars were used to go in boats to collect grass and reeds for Beas langar as they grew only on the opposite bank. Crossing the river frequently was difficult because of the swift current and stormy weather, and often the sewadars who went to collect the reeds would return late in the evening, sometimes as late as 11:00 at night. Sawan Singh used to wait for their safe return, not retiring even if it was midnight. Gradually, the river began shifting and the reeds and other thick grasses used for fuel grew on the Dera side of the river also, therefore, crossing the river was no more required. For details see, Kapur, Heaven on Earth, p.150. See also, Sethi, Treasure beyond Measure, p.50.
90 Sethi, Treasure beyond Measure, p.3.
91 Sethi, Treasure beyond Measure, pp.5-6. See also, Radha Soami Greetings, RSSB Magazine, Autumn 1990, p.45.
were deep ravines; he asked his devotees to perform service to fill the ravines. About 8,000 people volunteered and were engaged in this earth moving sewa. Over a million cubic feet of earth was carried by the sangat to fill the ravines and level the land to make sitting capacity for 20,000 devotees. This area also became inadequate after a few years, therefore, two more terraces were built on land leveled by mitti-ki-seva later.\textsuperscript{92}

As the sangat increased, the facilities in langar were also increased. The wheat used in the Dera langar was always of highest quality; about 12 to 14 tons of whole wheat flour was used to make chapattis for two meals during bhandara days till 1970.\textsuperscript{93} A new flour mill was installed and a new chappati room was built closer to the new langar building to make the transport of food easier at bhandaras; a dough making electric machine was installed and many water tanks were constructed with 50,000 gallons of water capacity.\textsuperscript{94}

Baba Gurinder Singh, the present Master, has taken several steps in the growth of langar. During the last twenty years, the whole langar ghar has been remodelled and a number of new sheds, rooms and halls have been constructed for using them to store the grains, vegetables, fuel and cooking etc., most of the old buildings at langar have been given a new look. To provide smooth service of prepared chapattis, the number of hot plates called lohans have been increased to 140. A number of

\textsuperscript{92} Kapur, \textit{Heaven on Earth}, pp.372-73.


\textsuperscript{94} Spiritual Link, RSSB Magazine, Summary (Dera Annual Report 1980), October 1981, p.58. See also, Balwant Singh, \textit{The Radha Soami Satsang Beas (Punjab) and its Schismatic Groups}, pp.102-03.
accommodation blocks have been constructed in the langar for accommodating sewadars coming especially on bhandara days. The number of cottage wheat flour mills has reached 20. New roads have been constructed at the langar premise, the entire network of tarring path in the langar has been laid down. The new utensils of high quality same as the bhojan bhandar have been provided in langar, around 400 water taps have been installed around the serving area of langar. At present, Dera langar has maintained its reputation for being a model of perfect organization. The free langar complex now covers over 48 acres of area and operates round the clock.

Dera Langar

As said earlier, 30 pounds of cereal and sugar were needed to prepare parshad for the devotees in the last years of 19th century, the needs of the langar commodities increased as the time passed, there have been shown in the following table (in kilograms):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Wheat</th>
<th>Maize</th>
<th>Rice</th>
<th>Pulses</th>
<th>Salt</th>
<th>Desi Ghee</th>
<th>Sugar</th>
<th>Gur</th>
<th>Mustard Oil</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1977</td>
<td>5,81,600</td>
<td>55,300</td>
<td>61,600</td>
<td>1,27,700</td>
<td>11,500</td>
<td>4,700</td>
<td>12,600</td>
<td>14,300</td>
<td>1,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td>7,38,100</td>
<td>53,500</td>
<td>46,500</td>
<td>2,10,600</td>
<td>10,100</td>
<td>8,400</td>
<td>40,100</td>
<td>12,600</td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>20,52,100</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>8,09,300</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>91,100</td>
<td>3,07,900^9</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The agricultural products were made as well as developed at Beas since the times of Baba Charan Singh. Till 1965, Agriculture at Dera Beas had progressed

^9 Excerpts from the interview of a female langar sewadar as well as initiate of Baba Charan Singh Saroj Bala of Ludhiana on 24th August 2009.
^97 http://www.rssb.org/dera.php; Personal visits to Dera Beas (2011)
satisfactorily providing fresh vegetables and fruit for the langar. Experiments with two new varieties of better strains of wheat were given a trial and seem to have done well. Amenities for the visitors and residents which had been in existence were also showing greater improvement and efficiency.99 Till 1987, during the last years of Baba Charan Singh, nearly 960 acres of land in the river area was used for raising crops like, wheat, pulses, fuel wood and vegetables to fulfill the demand of Dera langar.100

During the last twenty years of Baba Gurinder Singh, the agricultural area has been increased to more than 2, 100 acres, and the entire needs of the langar in respect of vegetables and potatoes are being met from the Dera, along with substantial requirements of the fruit and vegetable stalls. The praise worthy thing is that organic farming methods are being adapted by Dera Beas.101 At present, there are 8 farms with the names as Amritsar, Gurdaspur, Haryana, Jalandhar, Ludhiana, Moga, Patiala and Sangrur in the whole mand at Dera Beas. Every agriculture farm is under a secretary of the place, he is responsible to look after the farms and agriculture.102

During the period of first three Beas masters, there was no proper arrangement of electricity at Dera, mostly lanterns, small oil lamps and candles were used. Baba Sawan Singh and Baba Jagat Singh made efforts to install proper sound system during bhandara satsangs.103 Charan Singh gave proper electricity facilities to Dera Beas. The installation of a diesel generating set to enable Dera to become self sufficient in power and electricity was a step on this front.104 Baba Gurinder Singh opened an electricity substation opposite the Beas railway station in 1994-95.105 At present, each corner of the Dera Beas has arrangement of electricity. A number of transformers have been installed to supply electricity to different areas of Beas, all connected wires have been laid underground and not a single is seen outside.106

During the early days of Dera Beas, there were no proper arrangements for clean water for drinking and cooking. During his visit to Beas, Sawan Singh noticed

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100 Ibid., Summary (Dera Annual Report 1987), Summer 1988, p.49.
102 Personal Visits to Dera Beas (2013).
103 Kapur, Heaven on Earth, pp.100-01; Spiritual Link, RSSB Magazine, 20, Summer, 1984, p.11; Excerpts from the interview of Joginder Kumari, an old female initiate of Sawan Singh.
106 Personal Visits of Dera Beas (2012).
Bibi Rukko bringing a pitcher of drinking water for Baba Jaimal Singh and for Sawan Singh’s bath from the well of Waraich, a mile away from Dera Beas. With the permission of Baba Jaimal Singh, Sawan Singh got dug a well. On 16 May 1897, Baba Jaimal Singh lit the kiln with his own hands as the inauguration ceremony of the well which completed on 8 December 1898.\(^{107}\) This first well of Dera Beas was called as ‘Soami Sagar’ on the name of Soamiji and became an important source of drinking water during the period of first three Masters. Under Baba Jagat Singh, the well was cleaned and made deeper; in addition he installed an electric water pump on the well on 24 July 1949.\(^{108}\)

To fulfill the need of water, Baba Charan Singh got installed taps at various places and built water tanks of about 50,000 gallons on each corner of Dera Beas to provide proper supply to the taps. By 1980, the entire colony came to have well-organized water supply system, with three large water storage tanks of 50,000 gallons each, 60 feet above ground, fed by deep tube wells. A number of small wells in the colony had now been filled in with sand so that the water is supplied only through large tanks under controlled and hygienic conditions.\(^{109}\) A number of permanent chhabils were built to provide drinking water to visitors, one chhabil was built near the kothi house opposite Beas station. In addition, temporary chhabils were arranged in the bhandara days. Baba Gurinder Singh constructed many water tanks in and around the Beas colony as the area increased. At present, there are more than 25 tanks having 50,000 gallons to 80,000 gallons of capacity of water. Rather than constructing permanent chhabils, Baba Gurinder Singh has got installed a number of taps all over the Dera Beas to provide drinking water, only two old permanent chhabils, one near the Snack Bar No.1 and another outside the kothi house near Beas station are functional even these days.\(^{110}\)

During the time of Baba Jaimal Singh, there was no shop to provide refreshment to visitors except langar. When Baba Sawan Singh settled there

\(^{107}\) On 9th December 1898, Baba Jaimal Singh wrote to Sawan Singh about the completion of the well: *The well is ready now. The water is seven cubits deep, sufficient for our needs. The layers of sand had ended, so the depth could not be increased. On December 8, the work was completed. The first water from the well was sent to Chacha Ji (brother of Shiv Dayal) and will probably be distributed as parshad among the sangat. But the formal opening of the well will take place when you arrive here, for more details, see, Kapur, *Heaven on Earth*, pp. 50-51.


permanently in 1911, the satsang flourished and many devotees started coming and staying at Dera. Baba Sawan Singh allowed one of his disciples, Aroor Singh to open a khokha (small shop having paddy roof) to serve milk, butter, tea, pakoras and jalebis to the devotees; this shop was situated at the back side of the old library of Beas. At the time of his death, he gave it to Mangal Singh, another devotee of Dera Beas who enlarged it. Baba Charan Singh, the fourth Dera master did not allow any other shop to be opened in the Dera. Sometimes, the temporary tea stalls were opened around Baba Jaimal Singh Hall in the bhandara days. To cater to the increasing visitors of Dera, he opened permanent canteens to provide them refreshment on nominal prices. Four canteens having a single hall operated in Dera Beas till the last years of Charan Singh. At present, three canteens having three halls with 1,000 capacity each are operating.

During the period of first three masters, Dera langar was the only source to take meals for visitors. Although the langar was open to all and free food was served, but there were some devotees who wanted to pay for their food. To cater to the need of those persons, Charan Singh built bhojan bhandars to serve food at nominal cost having no limit on quantity. A huge bhojan bhandar was completed by Charan Singh in April 1987. The size of Bhojan Bhandar was 318 feet × 216 feet having facilities like 3 dining halls with capacity of 450 persons each, 6 kitchens, 1 chappati shed, 1 preparation room, 2 store rooms and areas for washing utensils, storing fuels and a laboratory for testing milk. Baba Gurinder Singh, the present Master constructed new bhojan bhandars. He also remodeled old Bhojan Bhandar No.1 in 1995. At present, there are three bhojan bhandars having 3 dining halls each. During the last years of Baba Charan Singh, 42,000 people used to take meals from Bhojan

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111 Aroor Singh, who ran first small shop at Dera Beas was a man of saintly disposition, and was an old devotee and a personal attendant of Sawan Singh. The little profit he would make from the shop at the end of the day, he would give in sewa. For more details see, Sethi, *Treasure beyond Measure*, p.106; Excerpts of an interview of Joginder Kumari of Kalka, an old female initiate of Sawan Singh who has been the eye witness; Excerpts of the interviews of Pakher Ram, an eye witness of the period of Sawan Singh and Saroj Bala, the initiate of Baba Charan Singh as well as sewadar at Dera langar of Ludhiana.

112 Excerpts of the interview of Saroj Bala of Ludhiana, the initiate of Charan Singh during my personal visits to Dera Beas (2009).

113 Kapur, *Heaven on Earth*, p.376; Excerpts from the interview of a Bhojan Bhandar’s female sewadar Sangeeta Bala of Ludhiana on 21st September 2013.

Bhandar in *bhandara* days, at present, the number of people has reached to about 1,00,000.  

As the number of followers increased from different states and countries, Baba Charan Singh constructed a restaurant on the site of the old brick kiln in 1979, it was called Snack Bar. The main purpose of this Snack Bar was to provide various dishes to *sangat* coming from different places. Baba Gurinder Singh constructed one more Snack Bar as Snack Bar No.2 near Multipurpose (M P) Shed or Shed No.3, the old Snack Bar is now called Snack Bar No.1.

Besides, Baba Charan Singh provided some other facilities to Dera residents as well as the visitors. In 1970s, a U shaped pucca building was constructed for housing the Dera fruit and vegetable stalls. With the passage of time, the area of this building was expanded. Baba Gurinder Singh, the present master has reconstructed and enlarged the area of fruit and vegetable stalls by constructing separate halls for *sangat* and Dera residents. Another permanent fruit stall has been constructed near accommodation *sarais*. In the *bhandara* days, some temporary stalls are also arranged to fulfill the demand of visitors.

There were no arrangements at Dera to get daily need goods during the period of first three Dera Masters, the residents as well as visitors had to go to the market of Beas station or Amritsar to fulfill their needs. A provision store was built in 1960s at Dera by Baba Charan Singh to make available food stuff as well as other articles of daily consumption of Dera residents and visitors on subsidized rates. In 1979, a hall with adjacent storage rooms was constructed for packaging of goods sold at the provision store. In addition, the society made arrangements for temporary provision stores in the open to meet the requirements of the people during *bhandara* and monthly *satsangs*. During the period of Baba Gurinder Singh, one more permanent provision store has been constructed at the site of *sarais* to fulfill the need of people on *bhandara* days.

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The Dera Beas is located some 8 kilometers from the Beas Railway Station. In the early years of Dera, there were no arrangements of transportation from Beas railway station to Dera Beas. At that time, there was a narrow bridle path, skirting the river and passing through the fields was the only “road” connecting the Dera and the Beas railway station. Most of the people used to walk on foot from Beas station to Dera Beas. The only source of transportation was some tongas, three or four in numbers. Baba Sawan Singh constructed a building called kothi in front of the Beas station to accommodate the devotees who reached there at night.

The bus service to Dera was first arranged by Baba Jagat Singh in 1949. To facilitate travel to the Dera, special buses were started to run from major towns and cities to the Dera by Baba Charan Singh. A permanent bus stand was built for those buses, as well as for those shuttling visitors to and from the Beas railway station. In 1980-81, the road connected to Beas station and Dera Beas was widened to a width of 23 feet by Government on the request of Dera authorities. In 1987, a new road starting from Gate no.3 running to North for about 600 yards and then turning east and running for about 800 yards was constructed and paved with bricks by Baba Charan Singh. At present, the permanent old Bus Stand is at Gate No.1 and is used in ordinary days. Baba Gurinder Singh has reconstructed the old Bus Stand and constructed a new bus stand connected with Gate No. 6 and Gate No. 8. The main purpose of this construction is to clear the rush as soon as possible during the bhandara days (therefore, it is used in the bhandara days) only. There is also a parking space for general vehicles adjacent to car parking on North and Southern sides, constructed in 1994.

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120 Gazetteer of India, Punjab District Gazetteer, Amritsar, 1976, p.93. See also, Gazetteer of India, Punjab State Gazetteer (Volume-II), Govt. of Punjab, 2000, pp.1578.
122 Excerpts of the interview of an old initiate of Sawan Singh named Joginder Kumari of Kalka who herself had crossed in those experiences.
125 Spiritual Link, *RSSB Magazine*, October 1981, p.58
Since the inception of Dera Beas, trains were major source of transportation for devotees to reach Beas station. As Dera Beas grew, the Dera gurus tried to provide more facilities for the convenience of devotees. For instance, on the request of Baba Charan Singh, all mail and express trains running between Delhi and Amritsar also started stopping at Beas railway station. The railway authorities also started special trains for bhandaras. In 1987, a permanent ticket counter was opened in the Dera by Baba Charan Singh. A number of important transport changes had taken place, with the railway authorities being most considerate and favorably inclined to improve the amenities for passengers, particularly as the earnings of the Beas railway station have increased substantially over the years. In 1993, Baba Gurinder Singh got a railway booking agency set up in the Dera. In 1995, the Dera Beas railway booking agency was equipped with computerized reservation. At that time, a proposal was made to link the Dera with a railway line to Beas station which is still awaited.

During the period of Baba Jaimal Singh, the first book was published in the form of Sar Bachan in 1902 and after that Dera Masters published a number of books as the time passed (the detail of the growth of Beas literature is discussed in detail in Chapter Six). To place Dera literature, Baba Sawan Singh got constructed a library in 1911 near Dera Beas well which was one among the first buildings of the Dera Beas. Baba Charan Singh, the fourth Master, enlarged this library and named it as Maharaj Sawan Singh Library. Baba Gurinder Singh has constructed a new library in front

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130 Ibid., Summary (Dera Annual Report 1993), March 1994, p.47.
of Hostel No.6 having 20,000 square meter area, the library is called as Dera library at present.

Till the early years of Baba Charan Singh, the books were sold on temporary book stalls. There was no permanent arrangement to sell books. Baba Charan Singh constructed permanent book stalls in 1960s to encourage the sale of Dera literature. In addition, a permanent photo stall to sell the photographs of Beas Masters was constructed for the people who wished to have the photographs of the Masters. Baba Gurinder Singh, the present Master remodeled these book stalls and photo stalls, and also constructed another book and photo stall near the sarais. In addition, books are put on sale in mobile vans near the gates on bhandara days.

Initially, there was no proper boundary of Dera Beas, there were fields, waste lands, deep pits, and ravines on Dera Beas site, the boundary of the centre on the southwest was marked by well, known as Soami Sagar, and the two small satsang halls built during the period of Jaimal Singh. Towards the West, the Dera land ended at the small ridge of ground about 2 1/2 feet high, crowned with phulahi, a species of acacia tree which formed a hedge. During the period of first three Dera Masters, no boundary of Dera Beas was marked. In 1965, Baba Charan Singh constructed a boundary wall on the side of the village Waraich. He decided to remove the hedge on the river side of the Dera and replaced it in December 1970 with a 6 feet high and 3,500 feet long wall having three gates and eleven rooms for sewadars, who were on duty at the gates. The boundary wall was erected by Beas devotees in remarkable

135 Kapur, Heaven on Earth, p.149. See also, Sethi, Treasure beyond Measure, p.6.
short time of two weeks. Baba Gurinder Singh, got constructed a new boundary wall on the side of new satsang pandal in 2001-02. In addition, iron wires have been tied up to mark the boundaries of Dera Beas on the side of Beas river and surrounding villages.

Besides, a number of facilities have been provided to the visitors by Beas Masters. At the time of Baba Charan Singh, a branch of Canara Bank was opened at Dera premise to fulfill the needs of Dera Beas residents as well as sangat. A branch of Punjab National Bank has been opened recently in 2010 at Dera premise. Baba Gurinder Singh has shifted both banks in a newly constructed building in front of the Baba Jaimal Singh Hall.

During the period of Baba Sawan Singh and Baba Jagat Singh, there was no permanent space for the official work, therefore, the whole administrative work was done in two small rooms—one in the back and another at the front of the Master’s house. Baba Charan Singh constructed Secretariat having some rooms for offices in 1972-73. Baba Gurinder Singh has shifted the official work of Beas administration to newly constructed two double storied main buildings in front of Baba Jaimal Singh Hall (Old Satsang Ghar).

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136 Radha Soami Greetings, RSSB Magazine, September 1966, p.6; Sethi, Treasure beyond Measure, p.6. Baba Charan Singh used to sit in sewa every day before satsang, after satsang, and at least two hours in the afternoon during the construction of this wall, for more details see, Kapur, Heaven on Earth, p.376.

137 Legacy of Love, Pictorial Biography of Charan Singh, p.296; Personal Visit to Dera Beas (2013)


139 Personal Visits to Dera Beas (2010).

140 Kaushal, The Radha Soami Movement (1891-2010), p.73. At present, All of the buildings of Secretariat as well as Banks are nearer to the residence of Dera Beas Master, Personal visits to Dera Beas (2010)
It is noteworthy that Dera Masters have also taken interest in ecology, they preferred greenery in the Dera premise. They planted trees to create fresh atmosphere and beautify the surroundings. On the west side of the Dera, about 3, 00, 000 trees were planted during the period of Baba Charan Singh. Large lawns and gardens had come up in Beas, the flowering trees and shrubs were planted all along the roads. In addition, Baba Charan Singh developed a nursery to encourage plantation. Baba Gurinder Singh also encouraged plantation like his predecessor, he enriched Dera nursery, which has been shifted to another place near new satsang pandal with a number of national and international varieties of plants, shrubs and climbers. Various kind of trees can be found at Dera Beas like Acacia catechu, Acacia nilotica, Aegle Marmelos, Agathis Robusta, Ailanthus Excelsa, Albizia Lebbeck etc (See Appendix-III for list of the Dera trees).

Dera Beas has its own workshops since the time of Baba Sawan Singh in order to carry out repairs concerning different works. Baba Charan Singh and Baba Gurinder Singh constructed more sheds to use as the workshops for different repair works.

During the period of Baba Charan Singh, a special park was designed having a number of swings for children to play which has been shifted to another place by Baba Gurinder Singh according to the new architectural design of Beas colony, this park is called Children Park. Besides, Dera Beas has its own hospital, Nature Cure Clinic (the details of hospital and Nature Cure Clinic are given in Chapter 5), fire station, petrol pump, post office, telephone booths, a heli pad and cremation ground.

141 Kapur, Heaven on Earth, pp.375-76.
142 R.M.Pai and Sanjeev Sharma, Flora of Dera - Photo Album of Flora in Dera, Beas: Horticulture Department, 2008; Personal Visits to Dera Beas (2013).
etc. Interestingly, around 75% volunteers are involved in the Dera constructions, they provide free services called *sewa* to the Dera. In addition, Dera Beas has its own manufacturing units of bricks, pathway tiles, cement lattice screens, light weight cemented sheets, light frame pillars and poles to construct buildings. The Dera Beas was started with three *bighas* of land in its earlier period. The area of Dera had spread upto 3,500 acres till the death of Baba Charan Singh in 1990 and at present it has expanded to over 5,000 acres (approximately), the expansion is still continuing.

In retrospect, it can be said that a wild place has been converted into a well developed colony within one hundred and twenty years. Under the able leadership of five Dera Masters who nurtured this centre with the support of their followers who gave their whole heartedly free services to Dera Beas. All Dera Beas Masters paid attention to their mundane responsibilities, as all were married except Baba Jaimal Singh but remained faithful and dedicated towards their duties as Masters. All the Masters were educated except Baba Jaimal Singh who had not received any formal education but had the knowledge of *Gurmukhi* in which he wrote his letters to Dera *satsangis* (devotees). Baba Sawan Singh had done Engineering, Jagat Singh had passed M. Sc (Chemistry), Baba Charan Singh did L.L.B and Baba Gurinder Singh is a B. Com pass out. The major growth of the centre took place under Baba Sawan Singh, Baba Charan Singh and Baba Gurinder Singh. Baba Jaimal Singh established and nurtured wild place with the help of Sawan Singh with his limited resources and in a short period. Baba Jagat Singh could not contribute much in the growth of Beas due to his short period (three and half years) of mastership but he had remained active in the Dera activities from the period of Baba Sawan Singh. The priorities of the Beas Masters changed as the time passed, for instance during the first three Masters, the main development revolves around providing basic amenities to the devotees such as *langar* and accommodation for visitors. Baba Charan Singh increased the area of Dera Beas and shaped it as colony during 1951-90, the period of his Mastership. Baba Gurinder Singh remodeled the colony in a uniform manner on international standards during first 20 years of his Mastership from 1990-2010, the progress work of Dera Beas is still continuing under his guidance.

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