

IV THE AFTERMATH

Continuing Grief

Grief is personal and individuals deal with it differently. Many of the families have attempted to rebuild their lives and find mechanisms to cope with the sudden loss of loved ones. Some have attempted to move on by becoming involved in various activities or absorbed in their work. Others have moved away in the hope of distancing themselves from the painful memories. Still others have dealt with their grief by improving the lot of less fortunate people or have attempted to fill their personal emptiness by participating in activities to support the families in their collective quest for answers, justice or retribution.

Regrettably for some of the families, the murder of a loved one has led to further sorrow through family feuds, financial difficulties, uprooted lives and businesses, sickness and premature death. For these individuals, the tragedy of death has an added companion.

The Commission's Terms of Reference do not include the assessment of compensation. Nevertheless, the testimony of a number of family members mentioned this matter and this report would be incomplete without acknowledging their comments.²⁰⁵

²⁰⁵ Among the family witnesses who commented are: Dr. Bal Gupta, vol. 1, September 25, 2006; Zerina Pai, vol. 2, September 26, 2006; Parkash Bedi, vol. 2, September 26, 2006; Mansi Kinworthy, vol. 4, September 28, 2006; Krishna Bhat, vol. 5, October 3, 2006; Promode Sabharwal, vol. 6, October 4, 2006; Upendrakumar Abda, vol. 8, October 10, 2006; Shailendra Gupta, vol. 8, October 10, 2006; Ann Venketeswaran, vol. 9, October 11, 2006; Esther Venketeswaran, vol. 9, October 11, 2006; Neelam Kaushik, vol. 10, October 12, 2006; Sheila Singh Hanse, vol. 10, October 12, 2006; Laxmansinh Abda, vol. 10, October 10, 2006; and Amarjit Bhinder, vol. 11, October 13, 2006.

Compensation was paid only after prolonged civil litigation. The compensation varied in amount for reasons not disclosed to the Commission. Some families reported receiving nothing, whereas others were given cash payments or offers of air travel. Recipients of cash payments told the Commission of very modest settlements in some cases and somewhat more substantial payments in other cases. Even then, in addition to comments on the amount of compensation received, the Commission heard from witnesses such as Mahesh Sharma who urged that families of future victims of terror receive guidance:

... I understand that it is not in your mandate to award for any compensation, but I think I would like you to mention in your report that in future if such a thing happened...people should be given proper counselling before they sign anything.²⁰⁶

²⁰⁶ Statement of Mahesh Sharma, vol. 5, October 3, 2006, p. 496.

Donna Ramah Paul, Upendrakumar Narainji Abda and Laxmansinh Abda

After the loss of the entire **Bhatt** family (see section I-B *Broken Dreams*), the Commission heard from Donna Ramah Paul, Upendrakumar Narainji Abda (**Chandrabala Bhatt's** brother) and Laxmansinh Abda (**Chandrabala Bhatt's** nephew) about the impact of that event on their lives:

*We suffered psychologically. It has taken a long time for us to come to terms with what happened.*²⁰⁷

Laxmansinh Abda told the Commission how they questioned the existence of God. He noted the fact that the family had only received the equivalent of \$17,000 as compensation in total for the four family members and that no memorial of any kind was established in India. He and Donna Ramah Paul were angry that there was no appropriate contact by Canadian officials in Ireland or later as the investigation proceeded for many years in Canada and elsewhere: *There were no Canadian people to wipe my tears.*²⁰⁸ While Donna Ramah Paul did get support from her church in Canada and from the people in Ireland for which she was eternally grateful, she felt abandoned by the Canadian government:

*I don't need your pity. I don't need ... consideration. I don't need your mercy. I want justice from the Canadian government...*²⁰⁹

The **Bhatt** tragedy did not end in the waters off the Irish coast. **Chandrabala Bhatt's** mother sensed that something was wrong at the time of the fateful flight, but because she was bedridden the family did not tell her about the plane crash. Several months later she died, not knowing that her children and grandchildren had perished. The "not guilty" verdict in 2005 merely added fuel to a continuing tragedy, being *a second tragedy for our family heavily scratching their wounds.*²¹⁰

²⁰⁷ Submission of Upendrakumar Narainji Abda, vol. 8, October 10, 2006, p. 812.

²⁰⁸ Testimony of Donna Ramah Paul, vol. 8, October 10, 2006, p. 804.

²⁰⁹ Testimony of Donna Ramah Paul, vol. 8, October 10, 2006, p. 783.

²¹⁰ Testimony of Laxmansinh Abda, vol. 10, October 12, 2006, p. 996.

After 22 years, many of the **Bhatt** family's belongings are still with Donna Ramah Paul. They are tragic reminders of an ordinary God-fearing family whose lives were prematurely ended: *Simplicity was their way of life, and their belief in God was tremendous.*²¹¹

²¹¹ Testimony of Donna Ramah Paul, vol. 8, October 10, 2006, p. 991.

Parkash Bedi

Parkash Bedi lost his wife, **Saroj Bedi**, his daughter **Anu**, and his son, **Jatin**, on June 23, 1985. Parkash Bedi is haunted by the loss of his entire family and still mourns.



In Ireland after the crash to identify the bodies, Parkash Bedi was in complete denial of his loss. Only when confronted with a photo of his son did the horror begin to sink in:

I found my son Jatin's picture and he looked just like he was sleeping, like nothing had happened to him.²¹²

Jatin had been an excellent student, loved sports and always seemed to care about doing the right thing.



Parkash Bedi's wife, **Saroj**, was identified in Ireland by her brother. She was an extremely "caring person" as well as a gifted singer. Just days before the flight she had strange dreams, including one where she was flying like a bird with both her children in her arms and as she told her husband:

All of a sudden we are going down and finally fell into a black hole and never came back.²¹³



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Anu, his daughter, had been an A-plus student, a musician and artist, who dreamed of becoming a paediatrician. Because her body was not found, Parkash Bedi continues to believe that she is still alive:

²¹² Statement of Parkash Bedi, vol. 2, September 26, 2006, p. 249.

²¹³ Statement of Parkash Bedi, vol. 2, September 26, 2006, p. 243.

*I still have not performed the last rites on my daughter...I believe that she is still alive somewhere.*²¹⁴

In fact, he told the Commission that on some days he believes that his daughter might have suffered from amnesia and that she is living in Spain, having been picked up out of the water by Spanish fishermen.

The Air India incident has had a continuing impact on Parkash Bedi. He has seen a series of psychiatrists in trying to deal with the pain of his loss. Often, he has hurt himself physically, adding to the extent of his suffering. His mother moved back to India and stopped eating, often screaming, *Save me, save me, they are trying to kill me. I am drowning.*²¹⁵ She died shortly thereafter.

He said at the Inquiry:

*It looks like I am living, but I am like a dead body moving around.*²¹⁶

²¹⁴ Statement of Parkash Bedi, vol. 2, September 26, 2006, p. 252.

²¹⁵ Statement of Parkash Bedi, vol. 2, September 26, 2006, p. 254.

²¹⁶ Statement of Parkash Bedi, vol. 2, September 26, 2006, p. 253.

Mandip Singh Grewal

When **Daljit Singh Grewal** purchased a ticket from Vancouver to India to visit his ailing mother, he felt uncomfortable about travelling because of talk within the community about possible violence against the Government of India. To compound that, his travel agent attempted to discourage him from taking Flight 182 on Air India. Nonetheless, he persisted with his plans because he felt he had to see his mother.

Some 21 years later, his son Mandip Singh Grewal told the Commission of the permanent impact of his loss on their family:

The sudden loss of my father was devastating. Words cannot describe the impact his death has had and continues to have on mine and my family's life. My best friend was taken from me in a heartbeat and my whole world was shattered. I was forced to grow up fast and take on many more responsibilities. My mother tried her best to make sure that I could still enjoy life as a child, but the responsibilities were unavoidable.²¹⁷

The family has attempted to find comfort, but there is lingering sadness. Mandip Singh Grewal's mother now considers flying to be *one of the most dreaded and traumatic experiences*. When Mandip or his sister Prahbjot fly anywhere, their mother is stricken with fear and remains worried until they have arrived safely at their destination.

The gap created by **Daljit Singh Grewal's** death will not be filled. At the same time, the loss of a father has not diminished his children's positive memories:

My father was a compassionate and loving man who believed in truth, loyalty and true friendship. He had the gift of giving without the expectation of receiving anything in return. He was dedicated to his family, friends and work...

²¹⁷ Submission of Mandip Singh Grewal, Exhibit P-68, October 10, 2006, p. 843.

He was a devoted and dedicated father to both me and my sister Prahbjot. My father was very proud of us. Whenever possible, he kept me and my sister alongside of him, each holding his hand. He was an outstanding father that always encouraged us children to be confident and excel in all our pursuits.²¹⁸

²¹⁸ Submission of Mandip Singh Grewal, Exhibit P-68, October 10, 2006, p. 842.

Shailendra Gupta, Gaurav Gupta, Mansi Kinworthy and Shobha Dewan

At a young age, Shailendra Gupta had a successful ceramics manufacturing company in India employing 110 workers. His business was located 40 kilometres from his home. His wife, **Shashi Gupta**, was educated and taught English. Following her death, he closed that business and paid all 110 employees compensation so he could be a full-time parent as his wife had been.²¹⁹

Shashi Gupta had considered the children's education to be of paramount importance, so her husband assumed the responsibility to do whatever possible for his son Gaurav and daughter Mansi. Today both are successful and acknowledge the strong support of their father in achieving their goals.

Shashi Gupta's younger sister, **Suman Khera**, and her daughter, **Rashi Khera**, also perished on Flight 182. **Suman Khera** was an employee of Air India and had made arrangements for her sister to accompany them on the trip from the United States to Toronto.

Because of the death of her husband, **Suman Khera** and her daughter had moved into the Gupta family home. Mansi Kinworthy told the Commission that little **Rashi** never comprehended her own father's death, and often referred to Shailendra Gupta as "Dad." **Rashi** was three when she boarded the Air India flight:



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²¹⁹ Testimony and submission of Shailendra Gupta, vol. 8, October 10, 2006, pp. 850-855.

*The aunt we loved so much, our little cousin who would not be given a chance to grow up, they were all gone forever.*²²⁰

Gaurav Gupta was 12 years old when his mother, aunt and cousin perished. He is grateful for his father's devotion to him and his sister, but remembers difficulty in adjusting to losing his mother and other relatives. He cried frequently for three or four years after the bombing because he simply could not deal with it. On June 23rd and on their birthdays, he continues to look at pictures of his lost family and wishes them a happy birthday and tells them he wishes they were still here.²²¹

Mansi Kinworthy was nine when she lost her mother. In her evidence, she recalled that her mother considered family to be her top priority. **Shashi Gupta** basically did everything for them.

All I remember is my dad sitting in the corner of our house crying for days. My grandma too was devastated by the loss of her two daughters and a granddaughter. Her health started deteriorating then and she never got better.

...

*I don't remember crying much. I was in a state of shock. I could not comprehend what had just happened, but I knew that I would never see my loved ones again. My mother, who did everything for us, took care of us and...was the centre of my world...*²²²

Shobha Dewan, **Shashi** and **Suman's** surviving sister, presented a video statement to the Commission. She has devoted her entire adult life to caring for her ailing mother who has never recovered from the loss of two daughters and a grandchild. Shobha Dewan has never married.

Their mother had been left with three young daughters as her husband had earlier abandoned the family. She worked hard and pushed herself to the limit to ensure that her three girls could be

²²⁰ Submission of Mansi Kinworthy, vol. 4, September 28, 2006, p. 439.

²²¹ Video submission of Gaurav Gupta, Exhibit P-71.

²²² Submission of Mansi Kinworthy, vol. 4, September 28, 2006, p. 439.

educated and well employed. Since the bombing, she has deteriorated steadily to the point of being bedridden and she no longer recognizes anyone.²²³

Support from their extended family was strong, as were the bonds established with the Irish nurse assigned to help them in the weeks following the attack. That friendship still endures:

*She is like family to us and recently attended my brother's wedding in India. We keep in contact through frequent phone calls, letters and e-mail. We visit each other in Ireland, India and the United States.*²²⁴

²²³ Video submission of Shobha Dewan, Exhibit P-70.

²²⁴ Submission of Mansi Kinworthy, vol. 4, September 28, 2006, p. 441.

Shyla Aurora was a flight attendant on Air India 182. She was described by her sister Shipra Rana as *the light of our lives, just a super, super soul*.²²⁵ **Shyla Aurora** was one of 22 crew members aboard Air India Flight 182.

Shipra Rana appeared before the Commission as a member of the Air India crew members' group and the International Families Group. She explained how she had hosted a party for a number of the Air India crew members and their families on the evening before the flight. Besides her sister, these included **Inder Thakur, Priya Thakur**, and their son **Vishal; Rima Bhasin, Bimal Saha, Sunil** and **Irene Shukla**, and **Freddy Balsara**.

*At that day of the barbecue everyone was relaxed...no talk of politics...no talk about Air India threats. It was just a wonderful evening.*²²⁶

Shyla Aurora loved her job and went out of her way to make passengers feel at ease.

*If she served any Sikh she wore her Kara, which is a metal band, which is part of the belief of Sikhism.*²²⁷ *She would purposely make certain that it was visible when she was going to serve.*²²⁸

The effects on the family after the bombing were enormous. **Shyla Aurora's** parents, who were considering immigrating to Canada, now refused to come.

*My dad blamed the bombing on our laws...He never got over it. After my sister, my dad died a bit every day. He used to write and recite poetry. That was his passion. He stopped.*²²⁹

²²⁵ Testimony of Shipra Rana, vol. 7, October 5, 2006, p. 676.

²²⁶ Testimony of Shipra Rana, vol. 7, October 5, 2006, p. 678.

²²⁷ This steel wristband is one of five Sikh articles of faith serving as visible signals of the wearer's commitment and dedication to the order.

²²⁸ Testimony of Shipra Rana, vol. 7, October 5, 2006, p. 678.

²²⁹ Testimony of Shipra Rana, vol. 7, October 5, 2006, pp. 684-685.

Shyla Aurora's mother was the one who held the family together as they waited for news from the Irish crash site:

*My mother is an incredible woman, very strong, and she just feared something would go wrong with Dad after this. So she held herself back and just kept hugging us and saying 'Pray, pray, pray everything will be okay, don't worry, don't worry, we'll find her.'*²³⁰

Shyla Aurora's body was never found. Her mother has never been the same and still cries at the mention of her daughter. She comes to Canada each year to visit her family. Shipra Rana told the Commission:

*Air India has a policy when an employee...passes away, the parents or the next of kin get free passage for life. So Mom still gets her free passage, two tickets that she uses to come to meet us. And I will and I still fly Air India.*²³¹

When she flies Air India, Shipra Rana often encounters some of the older crew members at the airport. She asks if they remember her sister, **Shyla** – and they remember her very well.

Shipra Rana said that the families hoped to find the real truth about the bombing of Air India 182.

*You are our last hope. Life here goes on the same. What has changed today? Nothing, except the lives of the families of the Air India victims. All have moved on but us.*²³²

²³⁰ Testimony of Shipra Rana, vol. 7, October 5, 2006, p. 683.

²³¹ Testimony of Shipra Rana, vol. 7, October 5, 2006, p. 685.

²³² Testimony of Shipra Rana, vol. 7, October 5, 2006, p. 691.

Chandar Sain Malhotra

Atul K. Malhotra was a young aircraft maintenance engineer working for Indian Airlines, a sister airline of Air India, at the time of the bombing. He was returning to India from Toronto where he had been visiting relatives.

His father, Chandar Sain Malhotra, sent an audio tape to the Commission to provide more information on his son. **Atul Malhotra** was “full of promise” and had “an amazing work ethic”. In fact, he was not originally booked on Air India 182 but changed his mind. He arrived after check-in had closed. One of the pilots, a friend of his, permitted his late boarding. Coincidentally, it was the same pilot who had brought him to Canada the previous month!

Atul Malhotra’s death weighed heavily on his father. As he said,

After losing my son suddenly and unexpectedly in the Air India bombing, I was a finished man. ...The days were horrible for me, for many, many months – I was not a normal person. I would even cry at my job.²³³

Resigned to honouring his life, not his premature death, on **Atul Malhotra’s** birthday (January 23rd) the family carries out a religious ceremony and offers some puja.²³⁴ Each year on June 23rd Chandar Sain Malhotra makes a donation to a home for orphans and blind children.

²³³ Submission of Chandar Sain Malhotra, Exhibit P-75.

²³⁴ A religious ritual performed on various occasions by Hindus to pray or show respect to their chosen deities.

Rama Bhardwaj

Harish Bhardwaj was a multi-talented young man with promise. He stood first in his class in music, math, and biology, and graduated with an average of 94.5 per cent. He was accepted into the University of Toronto medical program with a full scholarship.²³⁵ **Harish Bhardwaj** loved music and played the saxophone, drums, trumpet and flute.



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Harish Bhardwaj was supposed to meet his brother Jatinder and other family members in Delhi. Jatinder Bhardwaj is still having a difficult time dealing with his brother's death.²³⁶ Their father, Parkash, had a heart attack in 1986 from the grief, stress and financial strain. He had traveled to Ireland to identify his son's body which was not found, and was upset at the "unthinkable" treatment from government officials who did not provide any kind of support.²³⁷

In Canada, **Harish Bhardwaj's** mother, Rama Bhardwaj, sent a written statement to the Commission. She said her boss told her to take time off to recover from the loss of her son. On her return to work, she *was let go without any reasons*.²³⁸

At a memorial tree planting at Queen's Park in Toronto in 1987, she told the assembled people how difficult life had been after the

²³⁵ Submission of Rama Bhardwaj, vol. 2, September 26, 2006, p. 155.

²³⁶ Submission of Rama Bhardwaj, vol. 2, September 26, 2006, p. 158.

²³⁷ Submission of Rama Bhardwaj, vol. 2, September 26, 2006, p. 157.

²³⁸ Submission of Rama Bhardwaj, vol. 2, September 26, 2006, p. 158.

tragedy, that she and her husband were both out of work and on the verge of selling their house.²³⁹

Rama Bhardwaj felt that some form of racial discrimination might underlie the fact that although highly educated and experienced, she had great difficulty in re-starting her career. She also told the Commission that she sensed that there was some discrimination in how the Air India Inquiry itself was being treated in the media. She wrote:

I am offended that the media wants to talk about how much this inquiry is costing. I am a Canadian taxpayer...Why are the Gomery and Arar Inquiries allowed while the Air India Inquiry gets so much criticism? The victims' families are still suffering.²⁴⁰

While courts of law and inquiries continue to search for answers, one thing is certain – **Harish Bhardwaj**, a scholarship student and a future doctor, died prematurely, leaving his family and a nation poorer from his loss.

²³⁹ Submission of Rama Bhardwaj, vol. 2, September 26, 2006, p. 159.

²⁴⁰ Submission of Rama Bhardwaj, vol. 2, September 26, 2006, p. 161.

Sanjay Lazar

Sanjay Lazar lost his father **Sampath Lazar**, his stepmother **Sylvia Lazar** and his young stepsister **Sandeeta Lazar** on Flight 182. His father was an in-flight supervisor that night. **Sylvia Lazar**, an award-winning flight attendant, had recently resigned from Air India and she and **Sandeeta** were along for a holiday. **Sylvia Lazar** was pregnant at the time of her death.



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Sampath Lazar had worked for Air India for 23 years and was a co-founder of the Air India Cabin Crew Association. Sanjay Lazar said in his written statement to the Commission that his father, a life-long trade unionist, *represented the cause of the downtrodden.*²⁴¹

Sanjay Lazar told the Commission how **Sylvia**, married to his father since 1977, had cared for his ailing younger brother for two years until he died of multiple sclerosis in 1981. **Sandeeta**, his stepsister, was born shortly after that devastating loss.

Life has not been easy for Sanjay Lazar, orphaned suddenly at the age of 17:

*...I have lived each day of the last 20 years in denial, getting nightmares of what happened.*²⁴²

While travelling to Ireland to identify the bodies of his family, Sanjay Lazar had a stopover in London, England. At his hotel there was a bomb scare, forcing already distraught families into the pouring rain at midnight and fuelling the grief that had only just started.

Once in Ireland, he encountered further distress. After he thought he had identified the body of his sister **Sandeeta**, another family made a claim that the young child's body belonged to them. To Sanjay Lazar's horror, *the body was handed over to them.*²⁴³ As he said:

²⁴¹ Statement of Sanjay and Anita Lazar, vol. 10, October 12, 2006, p. 974.

²⁴² Statement of Sanjay and Anita Lazar, vol. 10, October 12, 2006, p. 978.

²⁴³ Statement of Sanjay and Anita Lazar, vol. 10, October 12, 2006, p. 977.

*...her being snatched from the world is the greatest loss that I bear even today.*²⁴⁴

Back in India and an orphan, Sanjay Lazar was thrown out of the family home in a dispute and had to endure court battles over property and estates, leaving him with *scars that will forever remain*.²⁴⁵ Air India employed Sanjay Lazar on compassionate grounds following the loss of his family. He has successfully become a full-time member of the airline's flight crew.

In memory of his lost family and all victims, every year on June 23rd obituaries are placed in the *Times of India*, a memorial service is held at his church and funds are given for orphan children to help with their studies. Significantly, although Sanjay Lazar's employment is flying, he will not fly or travel on June 23rd

*...as it is a day of penance and prayer for us, a day of remembrance and solemnity.*²⁴⁶

By Sanjay Lazar ²⁴⁷

*Dad, you were my idol, my hero, and my teacher
Of the righteous truth, my greatest preacher.
Always a friend and more than a mother,
That was my darling Sylvia and none other.*

*And the greatest love I shall bear alone,
A part of whose life, I have lived and grown,
My dear little Sandeeta, Pebbles –the terrible one,
The void you've created, will be filled by none.*

²⁴⁴ Statement of Sanjay and Anita Lazar, vol. 10, October 12, 2006, p. 975

²⁴⁵ Statement of Sanjay and Anita Lazar, vol. 10, October 12, 2006, p. 973.

²⁴⁶ Statement of Sanjay and Anita Lazar, vol. 10, October 12, 2006, p. 978.

²⁴⁷ From *Love, Honour, Respect: The memories of our loved ones*, p. 179.

Satrajpal (Fred) Rai

Satrajpal (Fred) Rai lost his cousin **Kiranjit Rai**. In fact, **Kiranjit Rai** was also his stepsister because in gratitude to **Kiranjit's** parents for looking after him when he had become ill in his native England, his parents decided to *adopt or sponsor their daughter* [then niece] *to give her a better life in Canada.*²⁴⁸ Fred Rai told the Commission that as an only child he had always longed for a brother or sister and **Kiranjit** *fit that role perfectly.*



Twelve-year old **Kiranjit** was a good student who had won numerous awards. In fact, she was flying to India as a graduation gift for doing so well in Grade 6. Letters written by her classmates told of a caring, sensitive girl who was helpful to the other students.²⁴⁹ Fred Rai told the Commission proudly:



*My sister in the matter of two years...for somebody who didn't speak English and came to a new country, she assimilated... exceptionally well.*²⁵⁰

Kiranjit's death created enormous guilt for various family members. Fred Rai told how his parents *didn't take it very well at all. They still haven't.*²⁵¹ His mother somehow felt responsible for **Kiranjit's** death and had a nervous breakdown. Shortly after, she was diagnosed with schizophrenia and is still under medical care.



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²⁴⁸ Testimony of Satrajpal Rai, vol. 1, September 25, 2006, p. 96.

²⁴⁹ Testimony of Satrajpal Rai, vol. 1, September 25, 2006, p. 97.

²⁵⁰ Testimony of Satrajpal Rai, vol. 1, September 25, 2006, p. 97.

²⁵¹ Testimony of Satrajpal Rai, vol. 1, September 25, 2006, p. 101.

Fred Rai regrets that he never actually said goodbye to **Kiranjit**.²⁵² He told the Commission:

*For the past several years my life was spiralling out of control due to now what I realize was a lot of guilt that I placed on myself with my sister's passing.*²⁵³

His only real source of comfort is the families of other victims. Fred Rai is a non-practising Sikh who told the Commission he is not very close to his community.

*When I encountered all those family members going through the same grief, it was the first time I actually felt human, felt I was home.*²⁵⁴

Fred Rai feels that his involvement with the Rae inquiry and now this Commission has helped him to come to terms with himself.

*My involvement in this Commission and with the families has escalated. I finally feel liberated. I wanted to feel human again.*²⁵⁵

²⁵² Testimony of Satrajpal Rai, vol. 1, September 25, 2006, p. 99.

²⁵³ Testimony of Satrajpal Rai, vol. 1, September 25, 2006, p. 108.

²⁵⁴ Testimony of Satrajpal Rai, vol. 1, September 25, 2006, p. 104.

²⁵⁵ Testimony of Satrajpal Rai, vol. 1, September 25, 2006, p. 108.

Zerina Pai lost her brother **Noshir Vaid**, who was the assistant flight purser. They came from a “family of flyers” who all worked for the airline.²⁵⁶ **Noshir Vaid** had asked for this flight so that he could take his sister on a holiday:

*My friends in the airline had decided they would all request this flight to take their families on a holiday with them.*²⁵⁷

Just before the flight, her ex-husband, also affiliated with Air India, convinced her to see a doctor because she had not been well. She would take a later flight and meet her brother in Frankfurt. This twist of fate has weighed heavily on her:

*I've had to live with this fact for 21 years. I lost my brother because he left on the flight that was to take me on holiday. My parents reminded me of this constantly.*²⁵⁸

Also in her memory are the photo boards that had been put together in the hospital in Cork. On seeing the boards, many family members fainted, cried or fell to their knees. For almost a year, every time she closed her eyes she saw those picture boards.²⁵⁹

Noshir Vaid's death was particularly hard on his parents. His mother did not leave her house for 15 years except for temple and funerals, never a wedding or a party. His father lost all interest in his businesses and sold them off, one by one.²⁶⁰

Under pressure from Air India accountants to sign a settlement, the bereaved family finally agreed.

*My parents gave all the money to charity. Once we settled we never again heard from Air India. My parents once asked for tickets to travel to the U.S. to visit my sister. It was refused.*²⁶¹

²⁵⁶ Submission of Zerina Pai, vol. 2, September 26, 2006, p. 174.

²⁵⁷ Submission of Zerina Pai, vol. 2, September 26, 2006, p. 176.

²⁵⁸ Submission of Zerina Pai, vol. 2, September 26, 2006, p. 177.

²⁵⁹ Submission of Zerina Pai, vol. 2, September 26, 2006, p. 183.

²⁶⁰ Submission of Zerina Pai, vol. 2, September 26, 2006, p. 184.

²⁶¹ Submission of Zerina Pai, vol. 2, September 26, 2006, p. 184.

On the occasion of the first memorial service in Ireland, relatives of crew members of Air India Flight 182 were told to fly with tickets from their deceased family members' unused quota from the previous year. Unfortunately, this meant that the family members would have to fly standby. Concerned that they would miss the ceremony, the family members pressured Air India to find them seats on board. Zerina Pai said that for herself and others whose lives had been dedicated to flying, this treatment by their own employer was difficult to accept.

Ann and Esther Venketeswaran

Trichur Krishnan "T.K." Venketeswaran worked for Atomic Energy of Canada (AECL) as an engineer. He had originally come to Canada in February of 1964 as one of 30 young Indian men visiting to learn about the steel industry. When in Welland, Ontario, he was introduced to Ann, a young Canadian registered nurse.



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Ann Venketeswaran told the Commission that **T.K.** agreed to attend Salvation Army services with her. He continued with his studies abroad, and upon his return to Canada he told Ann that he had embraced Christianity. This was a major change for a man born a Brahman high-caste Hindu.²⁶² Eventually, **T.K.** married Ann in a Salvation Army church.

Together, they became very involved in church activities and he was constantly learning and studying the Bible. Their faith gave them strength and hope. Ann Venketeswaran told the Commission that she had encouraged her husband to visit India for his brother's wedding and to see his ailing father. He was going to start a new job with AECL upon his return and was close to receiving his professional engineering degree from McMaster University in Hamilton. Everything came to a halt on June 23, 1985:

*Losing a loved one to a terrorist bombing is not the same as losing someone to cancer. It is sudden and unexpected. It is murder, the taking of an innocent life. And for what reason and for why? We just don't understand.*²⁶³

Her world in disarray, Ann Venketeswaran felt extreme guilt, fuelled by her children, who told her that she had sent their father to his death.²⁶⁴

*I felt I was to blame, although I cannot explain why. I remember going out and looking up to the sky and feeling so alone. The stars looked like a million pieces of a plane bursting through the sky. I was in shock and felt paralyzed.*²⁶⁵

²⁶² Testimony of Ann Venketeswaran, vol. 9, October 11, 2006, p. 889.

²⁶³ Testimony of Esther Venketeswaran, vol. 9, October 11, 2006, p. 905.

²⁶⁴ Testimony of Ann Venketeswaran, vol. 9, October 11, 2006, p. 898.

²⁶⁵ Testimony of Ann Venketeswaran, vol. 9, October 11, 2006, p. 899.

Ann Venketeswaran undertook a treatment program to deal with her grief, but withdrew after two weeks. She had always relied on her faith as a primary source of healing. She told the Commission that the stigma of being in a treatment program eventually led to the loss of her job as a nurse.

David Venketeswaran was 13 at the time of the bombing. He had a difficult time adjusting to expectations that he could be “man of the house” and hid his sorrow by using drugs. Eventually, David sought help and went through rehabilitation. He graduated in chemical engineering and is currently employed outside this field.

His sister Esther has also had difficulty in dealing with her grief. She read the following text from her victim impact statement prepared for the British Columbia criminal trials:

I stood on the threshold of adulthood 20 years ago expecting, wanting and waiting to become part of a good world, do good things and have good people in my life who loved me. But June 23rd, 1985 was the day that shattered the end of my peaceful, protected, happy and loving world where I had a mother and a father.²⁶⁶

Esther Venketeswaran told the Commission how she worked over the years to ensure that the voices of the victims’ families would be heard. She expressed frustration at the lack of official response for a long time. Like her mother, she is grateful for the Salvation Army and the spiritual support they have given.

Esther Venketeswaran told the Commission that after seeing many families share their private grief she eventually saw value in the Inquiry. She continues to struggle with her grief:

Grief has paralyzed my life, leaving me in an arrested state of development that was never fully realized had my father remained alive. I am intimately acquainted with loneliness and it hurts terribly, more so during the holiday season when it’s family time and when I see other families gathered together in various social settings. I feel like a misfit, an outsider and social pariah.²⁶⁷

²⁶⁶ Testimony of Esther Venketeswaran, vol. 9, October 11, 2006, p. 923.

²⁶⁷ Testimony of Esther Venketeswaran, vol. 9, October 11, 2006, p. 925.

Preserving the Memory

In addition to their quest for justice in the deaths of so many innocent people, the families of the victims were intent on ensuring that the memory of their loved ones would be preserved and honoured in perpetuity by memorials and other remembrances. These memorials took the form of public monuments first in Ireland and also in various places across Canada. In addition, the families have established scholarships, awards, sports tournaments and other tributes in their local communities. There are many prayer services which take place each year on June 23rd.

One comprehensive initiative was a memorial book published in 2005 entitled *Love, Honour, Respect: The memories of our loved ones*. The book is referenced in this report. It documents the lives of many of the victims and includes photos, poems, inspirational messages and other touching memorabilia.

As well, a number of other books have been written by journalists and family members. They provide additional background and insights into the lives of individuals affected by the bombing. These must be distinguished from other books and films based loosely on the events of the tragedy. In the latter case, the authors may have used artistic licence to develop stories which are not necessarily based on facts. Whether fact or fiction, whether book or monument, and whether developed by family members or third parties, all of them contribute in some way to keeping the memories alive.

Memorial Sites

Ireland

As previously mentioned, the first physical memorial dedicated to the victims is the dramatic and impressive structure at Ahakista on Dunmanus Bay, Ireland, close to where Air India 182 crashed. Each year families and lately Canadian dignitaries gather on June 23rd to honour the memory of the victims. For many of the families, this is an opportunity to solidify the already strong bonds that have been developed with the local Irish community. Ramachandra Gopalan, who lost his younger brother **Krishnakumar**, told the Commission:

I do not have any words to describe their generosity, their kindness, especially the nurse who took care of us and even when I went for this memorial -- for the 20th memorial -- she could identify us, whereas we have lost track of the face.²⁶⁸

He went on to describe how every year in Ahakista:

...the children from the school go and play music at the very same time the accident was supposed to have happened, indicated by the sundial there.²⁶⁹



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Canada

In Canada a number of memorial structures have since been or are being built. In addition to memorials in smaller locations like Hagersville, Ontario and Middle Arm, Newfoundland and Labrador, a number of

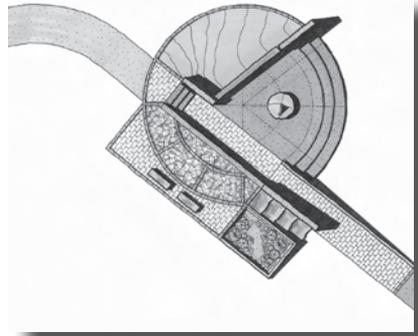
²⁶⁸ Statement of Ramachandra Gopalan, vol. 8, October 10, 2006, p. 826.

²⁶⁹ Statement of Ramachandra Gopalan, vol. 8, October 10, 2006, p. 827.

public monuments have been established by the federal government in partnership with the provinces and municipal governments in Vancouver, Toronto and Ottawa, with a fourth planned shortly in Montreal.

On June 23, 2007, 22 years after the destruction and death, a host of dignitaries including Prime Minister Stephen Harper, Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty and Toronto Mayor David Miller helped dedicate a permanent memorial to the victims along the Toronto waterfront. Family member Lata Pada, reflecting on the moment, said:

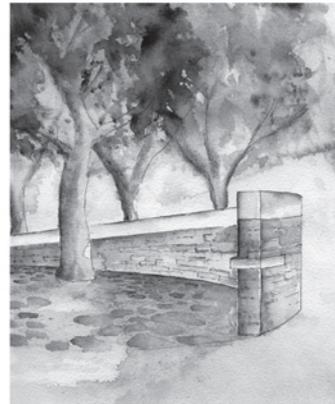
It was such a serene, beautiful day and somehow it felt that this is a moment of thanksgiving as we finally have a place in Canada that the families of the Kanishka victims can go to, to reflect on those lost souls who touched our lives. You can't but be overwhelmed when you see 331 names etched into the black granite walls. It is no longer a statistic.²⁷⁰



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Five weeks later, in Vancouver's Stanley Park, another permanent memorial was officially unveiled. At the ceremony, Jayashree Thampi, representing the Air India Victims' Families Association, gave particular emphasis to the 82 children who perished:

The memorial wall, etched with the names of the victims, immortalizes the lives lost in this act of terrorism. The children's playground symbolizes the innocence of those children who died in this tragedy. This place offers a beacon of hope to the children of today and the future.²⁷¹



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²⁷⁰ "Kanishka victims finally get a memorial in Canada" by Ajit Jain, June 25, 2007, <http://specials.rediff.com/news/2007/jun/25sd1.htm>

²⁷¹ <http://www.cbc.ca/canada/british-columbia/story/2007/07/27/bc-airindiamemorial.htm>

In Ottawa, an annual memorial service is held at a monument at Dow's Lake. Ramu Ramakasavan told the Commission:

By the third anniversary in 1988, my conscience prodded me to try to assist the victims' families in organizing or simply attending the annual memorial at Dow's Lake in Ottawa.²⁷²

He went on to say that *the annual memorial event included a multi-faith prayer meeting where all religious groups, including Sikhs, were invited.*²⁷³

While Canada's response was slow, it is commendable that recognition of this Canadian tragedy is now publicly demonstrated.

Tributes and Memorial Services

Many local communities have created tributes to commemorate some of the victims. **Dr. Anchanatt Mathew Alexander** was a respected physician in Hagersville and Jarvis, Ontario. His son told the Commission:

The communities that he served loved him so much that they organized their own memorial service once they heard the tragic loss of their dear doctor. They also named a nursery of the hospital which he worked at after my father and also planted a tree there in his honour.²⁷⁴

Memorial Books

Of all the various memorial books, none is more personal than *Love, Honour, Respect: The memories of our loved ones* released in 2005 by the Family Members of the Victims of Air India Flight 182 and Narita. Led by two family member volunteers, Mona Sandhu of Brampton, Ontario, and Smita Bailey of Edmonton, Alberta, the book (Exhibit P-303), was produced by the British Columbia Ministry of the Attorney General with financial support from the federal Department of Justice.

²⁷² Testimony of Ramu Ramakasavan, vol. 1, September 25, 2006, p. 114.

²⁷³ Testimony of Ramu Ramakasavan, vol. 1, September 25, 2006, p. 117.

²⁷⁴ Statement of Robbie Mathew Alexander, vol. 5, October 3, 2006, p. 501.

The Honourable Bob Rae told the Commission:

...it's a magnificent book, which all Canadians should see, in which the lives of the people who were lost are described.²⁷⁵

National Day of Remembrance for Victims of Terrorism

The Honourable Bob Rae went on to say that during his inquiry into how Canada should be handling outstanding questions from the Air India bombing:

I just got a continuing sense that we hadn't ... come to grips with this; which is why I came to attach so much importance to the work of memorialization...²⁷⁶

Part of that memorialization was the establishment of June 23rd as a National Day of Remembrance for Victims of Terrorism. As Canadians become more aware of the continuing threats of terrorism, the bombing of Air India Flight 182—the most fatal act of terrorism in Canadian history—will be remembered by Canadians hopefully forever.

²⁷⁵ Testimony of the Honourable Bob Rae, vol. 6, October 4, 2006, p. 558.

²⁷⁶ Testimony of the Honourable Bob Rae, vol. 6, October 4, 2006, p. 558.

Scholarships

As evidenced by many of the families, a large number of the victims had demonstrated academic excellence and were either promising students or at the height of their professional careers. Many of the victims' family members have established scholarships and bursaries as a tribute and to ensure that their hopes and aspirations will live through future generations of students.

Dr. Padmini Turlapati, who lost her sons **Sanjay** and **Deepak**, told the Commission:

*We and all the families started a memorial fund in 2000 and since then the families have been giving scholarships yearly, both in Ireland and Canada.*²⁷⁷

Parkash Bedi told the Commission that he had established several scholarships in India in memory of his wife and daughter.²⁷⁸

Murthy Subramanian established a yearly scholarship award for meritorious students in their final year at an Indian college in memory of his wife **Lakshmi** and his daughter **Veena**, as well as one at **Veena's** primary school in Canada.²⁷⁹

In 1986, the Khandelwal family established two scholarships for female students at the University of Saskatchewan in memory of **Chandra** and **Manju**, one in the College of Pharmacy and one in the College of Medicine.²⁸⁰

Dr. Chandra Vaidyanathan said that a scholarship was set up in memory of her brother **Krishnakumar Gopalan** at Carleton University in Ottawa. It is awarded to the best fourth year graduating student in mechanical engineering.²⁸¹ Her brother had graduated *with flying colours as the best student in mechanical engineering* from Carleton in 1985.²⁸² Nothing replaces the loss, but the scholarship is a touching and fitting tribute.

²⁷⁷ Testimony of Dr. Padmini Turlapati, vol. 2, September 26, 2006, pp. 198-199.

²⁷⁸ Statement of Parkash Bedi, vol. 2, September 26, 2006, p. 257.

²⁷⁹ Submission of Murthy Subramanian, vol. 4, September 28, 2006, p. 417.

²⁸⁰ Testimony of Dr. Ramji Khandelwal, vol. 6, October 4, 2006, p. 652.

²⁸¹ Testimony of Dr. Chandra Vaidyanathan, vol. 6, October 4, 2006, p. 584.

²⁸² Testimony of Dr. Chandra Vaidyanathan, vol. 6, October 4, 2006, p. 582.

At this time of grief it may be some condolence to know that Kris's many friends among students, staff and faculty wish to start a scholarship in his memory. I am currently working on this and I anticipate that it will be known as the Gopalan Award, to go to the highest standing student graduating in Mechanical Engineering.

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The University of Ottawa established a memorial award in the names of **Rachelle Castonguay** and Dr. Bogdan Zaborski who founded the Department of Geography in 1951. The Zaborski-Castonguay Bursary for Geography Students at the University of Ottawa is awarded annually to an undergraduate student with high academic standing who is participating in northern research through the Department of Geography.

Mahesh Sharma, who lost his wife, two daughters and mother-in-law, established scholarships in Montreal at the Royal West Academy and Elizabeth Ballantyne School where his daughters had attended.²⁸³ Professor Sharma, who has taught at Concordia University for 32 years, recently started three scholarships at Concordia in memory of his wife **Uma** and his daughters **Sandhya** and **Swati**.²⁸⁴

Anita Gupta, who lost her sister **Anumita**, told the Commission of finding an album that her mother had put together which contained, among other things, details of all the scholarships and memorials started in her sister's name.²⁸⁵

Vipin Bery, who noted that he was still dealing with the fallout from losing his family in the bombing, took pride in a prize established in his daughter **Priya's** name at her school in Westmount, Quebec, and first attended the awards ceremony in 1986.²⁸⁶

Dedicated Careers

A number of victims' family members have chosen to memorialize their lost relatives through their careers. One example is Susheel Gupta who lost his mother **Ramwati**. He told the Commission:

²⁸³ Testimony of Mahesh Sharma, vol. 5, October 3, 2006, p. 490.

²⁸⁴ Testimony of Mahesh Sharma, vol. 5, October 3, 2006, p. 490.

²⁸⁵ Testimony of Anita Gupta, vol. 5, October 3, 2006, p. 524.

²⁸⁶ Submission of Vipin Bery, Exhibit P-38.

Today I'm proud to say that I am a federal prosecutor who does serve the Canadian public working for the department, a position that I consider to be an honour both as a memory to my mother and to all who live in Canada.²⁸⁷

Kalwant Mamak, whose wife **Rajinder** died, told the Commission proudly that all of his three children had chosen careers in the field of law enforcement. His son Pal is a police officer in Sarnia and his other son Bob an officer in Ottawa. His daughter Mini in Toronto has a doctorate in forensic sciences and recently gave a seminar on terrorism in Washington to over 300 people. In addition, she spoke at a NATO gathering in Ottawa about terrorism.²⁸⁸



Special Events

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A unique memorial is the **Jatin Bedi** Memorial Soccer Tournament in which 12 to 16 high school soccer teams from across India compete.²⁸⁹ It has grown into a major event and receives coverage in the media. **Jatin**, whose mother **Saroj** and sister **Anu** also died, had been called to compete in a soccer tournament the night before he boarded Air India 182.



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²⁸⁷ Testimony of Susheel Gupta, vol. 2, September 26, 2006, p. 203.

²⁸⁸ Testimony of Kalwant Mamak., vol. 2, September 26, 2006, p. 151.

²⁸⁹ Statement and testimony of Parkash Bedi, vol. 2, September 26, 2006, p. 257.

Rama Bhardwaj, whose son **Harish** was a victim, told the Commission in a written statement that in addition to being a brilliant student who had been accepted to the University of Toronto medical program with a full scholarship, **Harish Bhardwaj** was a long-distance runner who had run in three Terry Fox marathons, the last one in 1984. In his memory, his friend Kevin Leblanc ran the Terry Fox marathon in 1985.²⁹⁰

These are examples of the generous actions taken by families and friends to ensure their loved ones are remembered and that hope may displace despair.

²⁹⁰ Statement of Rama Bhardwaj, vol. 2, September 26, 2006, p. 155.

