



An Evening with General JJ

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Smiling faces are rare on Wall Street these days and it is quite obvious as several companies have collapsed or have been forced to close down due to America's worst ever financial crisis in past few decades.

However, things could change if you are with someone like General JJ, who is known to be affectionate in his friend circle. He would make you laugh and release your tension whatever the circumstances be.

This is precisely what General JJ did on Friday at 55 Wall Street, a block away from the New York Stock Exchange. The first Sikh Chief of Army Staff of India, and now the Governor of Arunachal Pradesh, General (ret'd) Joginder Jaswant Singh was the chief guest at the annual Sikh Gala, which was attended by the who's who of the Sikh community and some other eminent people from the Wall Street.

It was not a customary speech though - wherein people of his stature and that too a retired general would be seen reading out from a written text in a serious tone. Not many of those who attended the event would have expected otherwise. In fact, when he was invited by noted Sikh and hotelier Sant Chatwal on the stage for his key note address, the attendees were only expecting that his speech would be in tune with the present somber mood of the Wall Street.

To the surprise of many, it was not the case. It was not only inspirational- as expected of a general who has led the Indian Army - but also brought cheers and the audience jumped into laughter several times as he delivered his speech injected with stories, jokes and quotable quotes.

For instance, while praising the Sikh community he narrated the story of one Hawildar Fauja Singh, who was sent to Sri Lanka to fight the LTTE. While he was being sent with a South Indian battalion to Sri Lanka, the General said he asked Fauja to make sure that he comes back after learning Tamil.

"A few months later when he came back, he was still speaking Punjabi. I asked him, what happened. He told me he has not learnt Tamil, but the rest of the Madrasi

battalion has started speaking Punjabi. So he has no problem. This is the spirit of Punjabi," General JJ said amidst applause and laughter from those attending the gala.

As he crossed his allotted quote of time for the speech and was asked by the Masters of Ceremony - Chiranjeev Kathuria, the successful businessmen from Chicago, who is developing a spacecraft that would take people from US to India in less than an hour - the General simply refused to accept the orders and sought the mandate from the public.

"If you ask me to end my speech in just three-four minutes, it is not worth coming so far away from India," he said and then asked people to support him. "Please raise your hand if you want me to continue," General JJ said. Almost all the hands were raised and there was another round of applause.

"Punjabis can't be suppressed by anybody," he asserted.

Giving a glimpse of the Punjabi spirit, General (rtd) J J Singh gave several examples from the rich cultural tradition of the Sikhs and it has been quietly adopted by people across the world. "Mauja hi Mauja," is there any English equivalent of this word, he asked and himself gave the answer: "No"

The very next moment he said: "Sade Naal Rahoge to Aish Karoge". For him whenever people dance it a stadium, it is nothing but bhangra - the popular Punjabi dance, which has its fan club across the world.

This was not all; General (rtd) J J Singh started and ended his speech with two short presentations with patriotic songs running in the background. He showed how beautiful Arunachal Pradesh is and urged the rich Indian American community to come and invest in this North Eastern State of India.

And as he ended his speech, the guests now could justify why Sant Chatwal called him the third "Singh is King" of India.

The First "Singh is King" is Prime Minister Manmohan Singh. The Second "Singh is King" is Montek Singh Ahluwalia, Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission, and the third "Singh is King" is General (ret'd) JJ Singh. That is why, probably, people were seen bursting in laughter on Wall Street this Friday, one of the rarest thing there these days.