



G.S. DHILLON



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Gurdial Singh Dhillon was born on 6 August 1915 at Panjwar, Amritsar, in Punjab. He got his early education at Amritsar and later joined the Government College and the University Law College, Lahore (now in Pakistan) for higher education. Being a Law Graduate, Dhillon became an advocate and made a mark in the legal profession. However, the profession could not affect his commitment to patriotism and concern for his fellow beings. He, therefore, involved himself actively in the freedom struggle and the *Kisan Movement* and faced the wrath of the British rulers. He was imprisoned twice.

Dhillon became a fearless and forceful writer when he took journalism as his profession after India's independence. He promoted communal harmony by educating people on the nefarious activities of divisive communal forces. He also became the Chief Editor of the Urdu daily *Sher-e-Bharat* and the Managing Director of the National Sikh Newspapers Ltd. He was a member of the Executive Committee of the Journalists' Association of Punjab till 1952 and also a member of the State Press Advisory Committee till 1953.

Dhillon started his parliamentary career as a member of the Punjab Legislative Assembly from 1952 to 1967 where he shouldered various legislative responsibilities with distinction. He was the Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee and the Committee of Privileges. He also held the position of the Chairman of the Non-agriculturist Land Taxation Committee in the State. He was elected the Deputy Speaker of the Assembly in 1952 and remained in Office till 1954. He also served the Assembly as the Speaker from 1954 to 1962. As Speaker, he conducted the proceedings of the House in a pragmatic manner and earned the respect from all sections of the House. During 1965-66, he worked as Minister of Transport, Rural Electrification, Parliamentary Affairs and Elections and also for Rehabilitation and Resettlement of the 1965 war-hit areas in Punjab.

His parliamentary career got a boost when Dhillon was elected to the Fourth Lok Sabha in 1967 from the Taran Taran parliamentary constituency in Punjab. He was appointed Chairman of the Select Committee on the Banking Laws (Amendment) Bill, 1967 and Chairman of the Committee on Public Undertakings for two terms, for 1968-69 and 1969-70. He was also a member of the Panel of Chairmen. Dhillon was unanimously elected as the Speaker of the Fourth Lok Sabha on 8 August 1969 when the then Speaker, Dr. Neelam Sanjeeva Reddy resigned from the Office to contest the Presidential election. In Lok Sabha also, his way of conducting the proceedings made him endeared to all members of the House.

After he returned to the Fifth Lok Sabha in 1971, Dhillon was re-elected as the Speaker on 22 March 1971. His re-election had reflected the trust of the members he was enjoying and his ability to conduct the proceedings in an objective and just manner.

He had shown the highest respect for parliamentary institutions. Dhillon believed that in order to conduct the proceedings of the House in a useful and fruitful manner, it was necessary that all sections in the House should work in a disciplined way and also show respect not only to the rules and regulations but also to customs and conventions of the House. He emphasized that the members should show tolerance and listen to with patience what others, including their opponents, had to say and meet or counter the points made by them through arguments in a logical and controlled manner. Only then the dignity and authority of the House could be ensured.

Dhillon was also closely associated for many years with the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and the Inter-Parliamentary Union. He presided over the 21st Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference held in New Delhi in October-November 1975. He also attended the First Commonwealth Speakers' and Presiding Officers' Conference held in Ottawa (Canada) in September 1969. He had the distinction of conducting and presiding over the Second Conference of Commonwealth Speakers and Presiding Officers held in India in 1970-71.

Dhillon presided over the 57th Inter-Parliamentary Conference held in New Delhi in October-November 1969. The way he conducted the proceedings of the Conference was praised by one and all. Dhillon was elected the President of the Inter-Parliamentary Council at its 113th Session held in Geneva in October 1973. He was the first Asian to hold this prestigious position. He was re-elected as the President of the Inter-Parliamentary Council in Tokyo in October 1974 and occupied that post till 1976. As the President of the Council, Dhillon presided over various Meetings of the Inter-Parliamentary Union. In recognition of his outstanding contribution to the promotion of the ideals of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, Dhillon was honoured posthumously by an IPU Award at the inaugural function of the 89th Inter-Parliamentary Conference held in New Delhi in 1993.

Dhillon resigned from the Office of the Speaker on 1 December 1975 and became the Minister of Shipping and Transport in the Union Cabinet. He also served as the Indian High Commissioner in Canada during 1980-82. As High Commissioner, he proved himself to be a seasoned diplomat and contributed significantly to the strengthening of Indo-Canadian relations.

Dhillon was again elected to the Eighth Lok Sabha in September 1985 and was appointed as Minister of Agriculture, the position he occupied from 12 May 1986 to 14 February 1988. His performance in the Council of Ministers was greatly appreciated. He was also a member of the Planning Commission from 1986 to 1988.

Dhillon was a member in Fourth, Fifth and Eighth Lok Sabhas and served the country successfully in various capacities at the Centre.

As a multifaceted personality with interests that ranged from law to journalism and from education and sports to constitutional studies and a man of commitment and principles, the institution of Parliament was just like a temple of democracy for him and as such he had shown maximum respect for the House, its rules, procedures, traditions and conventions.

Dhillon was also actively associated in promoting many social, cultural and educational organisations and academic bodies. He was an elected member of the Syndicate and the Senate of the Panjab University,

Chandigarh from 1956 onwards, of Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar, during 1971-78 and again during 1985-86 and of the Punjabi University, Patiala during 1968-69. He had also the honour of holding the position of the Dean of the Faculty of Law, Panjab University, Chandigarh during 1974-81 and 1984-86. Besides, Dhillon served on the Board of Governors, Yadavendra Public School, Patiala and the Public School, Nabha for some years. He was also a member of the *Jallianwala Bagh Memorial Trust*, Amritsar. An erudite scholar, he was the co-editor of *Chatrik Abhinandan Granth*. He was also a progressive farmer, a sportsman and a patron of civil aviation and gliding. He was awarded the *Tamra Patra* in recognition of his services to the nation as a veteran freedom fighter.

Dhillon was conferred LL.D. by the Panjab University, Chandigarh in 1969, the Punjabi University, Patiala in 1971 and the Kurukshetra University in 1973. He was awarded D. Litt. by the Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar in 1971, Doctor of Political Science by the Humbolt University, Germany in 1973 and Ph.D. by the Sung Kuyun Kwan University (Republic of Korea) in 1973.

Dr. Gurdial Singh Dhillon passed away on 23 March 1992.

Glowing tributes were paid to him on his demise in Lok Sabha. Paying his tribute the then Speaker, Shri Shivraj V. Patil said that Dr. Dhillon was a suave, gentle and very affectionate person and these qualities made him endeared to all within the country and abroad. The then Prime Minister, late Shri P.V. Narasimha Rao described his death as a great loss and said what was remarkable about him was his personality, very pleasant, soft-spoken, firm where it was needed. Paying his tribute, Shri L.K. Advani said that his grace and gentility left a deep imprint on all his colleagues. Shri Somnath Chatterjee said that he dedicated his life for strengthening the foundations of parliamentary democracy in this country and for a better life for the common people of this country.