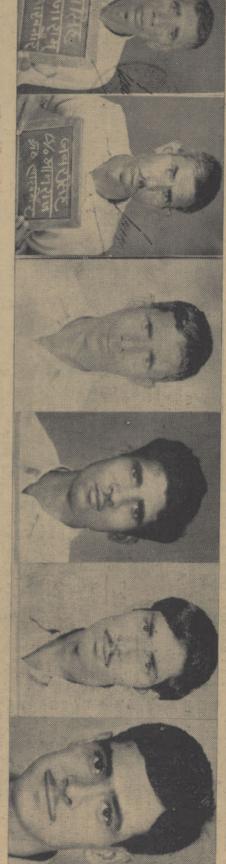
# Sleuths open

# vendetta

# TIM

VOL. ZO.



They escaped the noose: Bhag, Jabbar, Kadam, Ranjeet, Mohinder and Ram Kumar Singh.

## Our Delhi Bureau

S IX men of α Rajput family of Lakhnour village, near Saharanpur, have just escaped hanging for α murder they never committed. No one knows for certain who murdered Asha Ram, α harijan servant, as α result of α 50-year-old feud over land between two of the richest families in the village.

tive Agency, Delhi, and eight MLAs, and M.P., and two MLCs, who raised the issue with the government The six men—Bhag, Ranjeet, Kadam, Ram Kumar,
Jabar and Mohinder Singh
—would have paid with
their lives, but for the perseverence of Goliath Detec-

### Found murdered

The story begins on February 28, 1973, when Asha Ram was found murdered and thrown in a well. He bore 41 wounds and four contusions on his body. His brain had been blown out.

The sleepy village was shocked at the gruesome murder. In the next three years, it continued to live under terror, since it was known that the real murderers of Asha Ram were still in the village, behaving like highway robbers,

The poor villagers were fur

In our issue of August 21, 1976, the picture of Mr. Nawal Kishore Sinha, M.P., was printed on the front page with our lead story on corruption. It was a mistake as he does not figure in the story at all. We sincerely

Ed.

which the investigations into the murder were conducted. Asha Ram, everyone knew, was a pawn in the long-drawn rural vendetta of the local landlords. It is now revealed that he was killed for the specific purpose of getting the Singh brothers involved. It is also becoming increasingly clear that the local police too played a significant part in this medieval outrage. The lone eye-witness to the murder, Sheesh Pal, who was sleeping next to Asha Ram on the fateful night, was kept in wrongful confinement for over ten days by the investigating officers. He was then made to sign a statement involving the six brothers.

The moment he was out of the clutches of the police, Sheesh Pal filed an affidavit involving some of the prosecution witnesses and some others. He also said he had been forced to implicate the six brothers, at the peril of his own life.

## Tampered police records

# The Superintendent of Police chose to shield the investigating officer, Attar Singh, till the MLAs, MP and MLCs prodded the government to institute an inquiry by the CID. The CID officer was, it is alleged, given tampered police records, with a backdated chargesheet and other documents. A year later, when the case came up for hearing, the new Superintendent of Police refused to change the chargesheet even though he himself had heard Mohar Singh, a prosecution witness, disclose the names of the real culprits.

sha Ram was a servant of Singh and his six brothers

who were tried for his murder. At one stage, he switched his loyalty to the faction led by Om Prakash and turned into a litigant against Man Singh. For the wily farmland gangsters his murder would at once bring suspicion on his former masters.

When all other atte secure a fair and free failed, the Singh broth the detective agency. The sleuths set to wo taperecorders, for the fin the remote village nour. r attempts to d free trial had brothers hired gency of Delhi

# Private talks

## recorded

They filled 23 casettes with private conversations, of villagers, police officers and others. The tapes told an entirely different story from what was narrated in court by an array of prosecution witnesses, who lagely belonged to the Om Prakash group.

Recordings of private conversations of policemen showed the extent to which some of the investigating officers were involved in this story of personal vendetta and faction

fights.

The police records showed that the first information report was filed at 11 a.m. on March 1, by a man brought from another village, 25 miles away. At least two of the Singh brothers, who helped fish the body of Asha Ram from the well, were not arrested for several days, even though they were named in the FIR.

The detective agency blew the prosecution witness outside the court in restaurants and private places. When word got round that the real story behind Asha Ram's murder was out, two of the principal prosecution witnesses turned hostile.

The tapes also revealed another conspiracy, which did not materialise obviously because Asha Ram did not play the game.

It had been suggested to him

had done it to avenge his defection. He was assured that the bullets would be removed in a good hospital and that he would be duly compensated. It has to be borne in mind that carrying of country-made pistols is a common practice in the villages of U.P.

Asha Ram's reluctance have bullets pumped into legs, even from a friendly tol, cost him his life.

Confronted with the massive evidence dug up by the detective agency and the public outcry, the Additional Sessions Judge S. K. Jain of Saharanpur acquitted all the six accused. He observed that Jai Singh, one of the main prosecution witnesses and a relation of Om Prakash, was inimical to the accused. The delay in lodging the FIR, he said, suggested that "actually the incident had not been witnessed by anyone."

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### Lost his

To cap the humiliation and the agony the six Singh brothers suffered for over forty months, is the case of Mohinder Singh, who lost his job in the pelhi Armed Constabulary when he was implicated in the case. Inspite of his acquittal, he finds no hope of getting the job back.

# "I CAN DO WHAT SATYA SAI BABA CAN DO"

challenge n is mow

hay says: "I shall become his slave for life, pressing his feet and serving him, if he demonstrates one real