

Nishan-i-Phul

THE ROYAL FAMILY ORDER OF THE STATE OF PATIALA

Lot 811



DIX • NOONAN • WEBB

THE RICHARD MAGOR COLLECTION OF MEDALS RELATING TO INDIA AND AFRICA
AND OTHER FINE AWARDS

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**THE NEW CONNAUGHT ROOMS
61 - 65 GREAT QUEEN STREET
LONDON WC2**

*Private viewing will take place at
16 BOLTON STREET, PICCADILLY, LONDON W1
by appointment only*

*Public viewing will take place at
THE NEW CONNAUGHT ROOMS
WEDNESDAY 2nd JULY FROM 8 am*

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Lot 811 *Nishan-i-Phul* - The Royal Family Order of the State of Patiala

Badge, breast star and ribbon collar, **gold** and enamel.

Complete in its leather covered wooden box of issue.

Designed by *Spink & son*.

Manufactured by *Garrard & Co., Calcutta & London* c.1925-30.

Dimensions: Badge 85mm x 42mm, breast star 90mm, ribbon collar 50mm x 13mm.

Formerly owned and worn by Maharajah Bhupindar Singh (1891-1938).

£4000-5000

Inscribed in *Gurmukhi* script: *Tera ghar mera asay*

An extremely rare set of insignia in superb condition and of the finest quality made by *Garrard & Co.*, the Royal jewellers. The *Nishan-i-Phul*¹ was the highest ranking of all the orders, decorations and medals that were instituted by the extravagant Maharajah of Patiala², Bhupindar Singh, the foremost Sikh Prince of pre-independence India who was known to have developed a passion for military trappings.



Figure 1.
Nishan-i-Phul - The
Royal Family Order of
the State of Patiala
complete in its box of
issue, c.1925-30.

¹ The order gains its name from the founding father of the Phulkian states, Chaudari Phul (b. 1629). As legend tells, Phul one day accompanied his father to pay homage to the sixth guru of the Sikhs, Guru Hargobind. In the Guru's presence, Phul scratched his belly indicating to his father that he was hungry. Guru Hargobind then proceeded to give his blessing saying, "He will have means not only to overcome his own hunger, but also to satisfy the hunger of many others. His horses shall drink water from the river Sutlej and the Yamuna". Phul later begot seven children. From his eldest son descended the families of Nabha and Jind, and from his second son the family of Patiala.

² Patiala State was the foremost of the five major Sikh States existing in 1947 and was the largest and most prosperous of them. In modern times Patiala was also probably the most prominent in terms of its military forces. Whilst not the largest, they were among the most highly valued by the British, and carried their high reputation into the Indian Army where five of its units were integrated. The State produced a number of very able rulers who ensured that Patiala and the Sikh military traditions were held in high esteem by the rest of the world.

Maharajah Bhupindar Singh

One of the titles of Maharajah Bhupindar Singh was 'favoured son of the British empire'.

Born in 1891 the orphan Prince came to the throne in 1900. He later became renowned as a mighty sportsman-cricketer, shot and a fine polo player- and for his great generosity and hospitality.



Figure 2.
Maharajah
Bhupindar Singh
of Patiala, 1891-
1938.

It was in the field of politics that his greatest contribution was made. His state of Patiala was known as the 'cradle of the Imperial Service troops' and on the outbreak of the First World War he placed all his resources at the disposal of the British Crown.

The Insignia of Phul

There are three parts to the insignia, a ribbon collar, badge and breast star. The entire ensemble is housed in the original presentation case of issue (see fig. 1).

Set beautifully in **gold** and blue enamel, the badge (see fig. 3) has a central double-edged *khanda* motif above two crossed *tulwars* dividing a trident, star and crescent. Surrounding them is the Sikh weapon, the *chakram* with lavish floral decoration in enamel bearing the famous inscription *tera ghar mera asay* (your home is my refuge) in *Gurmukhi* script. The whole being surmounted by an intricate four arched crown with gold ring suspender for attaching to a collar.

The incredible breast star (see fig. 4) is formed by twenty ceremonial *kirpan* and *khanda* emblems radiating from a central gold medallion with blue enamel trident, star and crescent with crown appliqué. The medallion, with some Persian script, perhaps a date, has an enamel band with the same



Figure 3.
Badge (and
ribbon collar),
set in gold and
blue enamel
bearing an
inscription in
Gurmukhi
script.

Gurmukhi inscription in gold: *tera ghar mera asay*. On the reverse, the star reads: *Garrard & Co. Ltd, Jeweller to H.M The King Emperor, London and Calcutta*.



Figure 4.
Breast star set in gold and blue enamel bearing Gurmukhi inscription with central gold medallion with Persian script.

The Symbology



The profusion of Indo-Persian weaponry in the order is truly striking, and harks back to an era in the early 18th century Moghul India when the sole support of the scattered and hunted Sikh guerrilla warriors was their belief in

the protection of the creator and destroyer of man as captured in the phrase *Sarab-loh*, or All-steel. The personification of this 'All-steel' presence was the love of weapons in all forms, but particularly the double-edged broadsword, the *khanda*. The *khanda* was used by Guru Gobind Singh to transform novices into warriors during his unique initiation ceremony and has remained a symbol, along with the *chakram* which he wore, synonymous with Sikh valour ever since. His injunction to remain ever-armed was obeyed by the faithful who covered their bodies and turbans in weapons as a tribute to their creator and destroyer. (see fig. 5)



Figure 5.
Sikh warriors,
Hyderabad,
c.1860 – notice
the *chakrams*
and miniature
khandas in the
turbans.

Following the annexation of the Punjab by the British in 1849, the disbanded Sikh soldiery was enlisted en masse to form a key component of the Victorian British Army. British officers were wise enough to maintain the potent



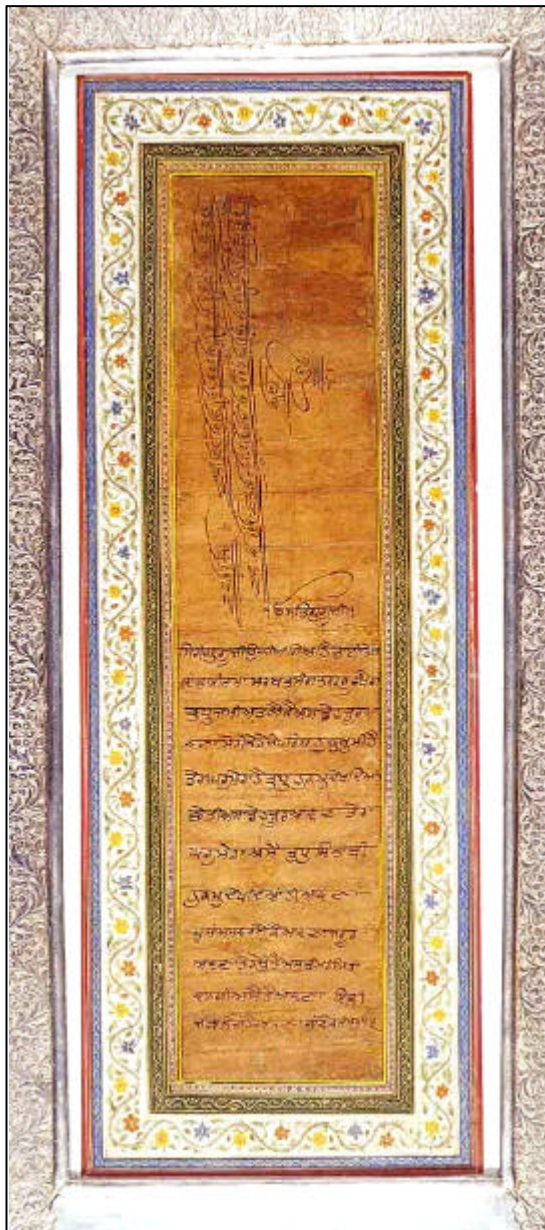
Figure 6.
Subedar Nihal
Singh, 45th
Rattray's Sikhs,
c.1880

symbolism of the
independently-
minded Sikh
warrior they had
recently struggled
to subdue and
readily utilised the
khanda and *chakram*
in regimental *puggari*
badges (see fig. 6)



In designing this order, the Maharajah would no doubt have wanted to mesmerise those he came into contact with when wearing it. This was the time when he was rising in the political sphere in the Punjab, traditionally the homeland of the Sikhs. It is reasonable to assume that Bhupindar Singh would have understood well what impact the popular symbology would have over the community at large, especially in the context of his ambition in becoming the foremost Sikh ruler in the eyes of the British establishment in India.

The Inscription



The inscription *tera ghar mera asay* comes from the famous *hukamnama* or written order addressed to the two sons of Phul, Rama and Tilokha by the tenth guru, Guru Gobind Singh (see fig. 7). Rama Singh and Tilokha Singh were devoted disciples of the Guru and on August 2nd, 1696 the Guru called upon them for aid in the way of a detachment of cavalry in his battle against the Hill Rajas. It was the great tenth Guru's *hukamnama* that bestowed special status on the house of Patiala. The letter read:

*There is one God. The Guru is great. It is the order of the Guru. Bhai Rama and Bhai Tilokha, the Guru will protect all. You are required to come with your contingent. I am much pleased with you. **Your house is my refuge.** On seeing this letter you should come in my presence. **Your house is my refuge.** You should come to me immediately. On seeing this letter you should arrive with horsemen. Do come. I have sent one robe of honour. Keep it with you.*

Figure 7.
Written order, *hukamnama*, from Guru Gobind Singh to the brothers Rama and Tilokha, dated 2 August 1696.

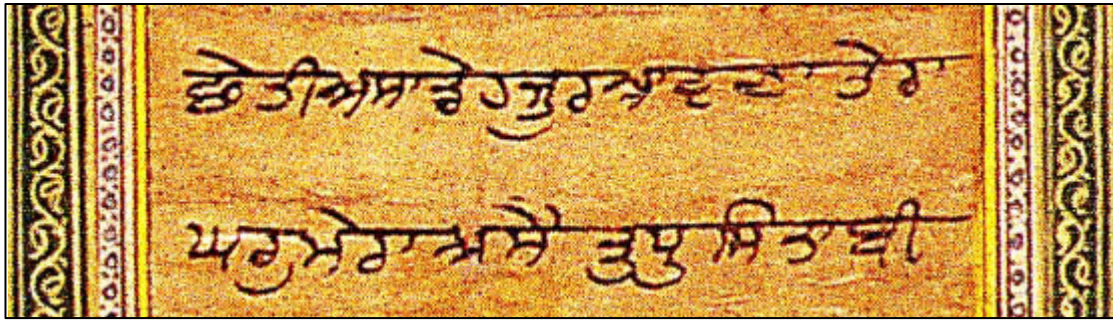


Figure 8.
Detail of the line from which the famous motto '*tera ghar mera asay*' originates.

The message was clear and the brothers sincerely obliged. Their response is claimed to have helped saved the Guru's life, who blessed the Phulkian house as his own. The famous motto being adopted ever since in memory of this.

Design and Manufacture



Figure 9.
Inside cover of presentation box.

The order was designed by *Spink & son* during the late 1920s, between the wars at a time when the link between the Royal house of Patiala and the British was becoming ever stronger.

The original watercolour paintings by *Spink & son* of the designs of this order along with others still remain with the royal household of Patiala. Both the badge and breast star read *Garrard & Co. London & Calcutta* on their reverse (see figs. 10 & 11) suggesting that both were made in London. However, the box reads *Calcutta & London*, indicating that the set was housed in its box at the Garrard offices in Calcutta making this extraordinary rare specimen rarer still (see fig.9).



Figures 10 & 11.
Reverse of both breast star and badge.

The existence of this order had been unknown to collectors until 1988. It is thought that only two complete sets were ever produced, one diamond encrusted version, worn on state occasions (see fig.12) and the other, in gold and blue enamel, worn on less formal occasions and presented here for the first time (see fig. 13).

Figure 12.
Diamond encrusted
version, sold by
Spink & Son., 22
November 1988.



Figure 13.
Gold and blue
enamel version
as offered here.



Both sets are thought to have been worn uniquely by Maharajah Bhupindar Singh and appear in some of his portraits (see fig. 14 for the gold and enamel order as presented here). Being solely the property of the Maharajah, this order was never intended to be awarded for service or merit by a particular department within the princely household as was the case for other orders commissioned.

Figure 14.
Maharajah
Bhupindar
Singh seen
wearing the
breast star as
presented here.

