

FORGED WILLS

A recent report in The Times brought the spot light on the issue of forged wills. The case was set in India in a world of wealth and intrigue.

Harinder Singh Brar was born into a family of fabulous wealth privilege and position. When he was three years old he was on the death of his father, crowned Maharajah of Faridkot.

In 1947 India won independence from Britain and with it Princely States that covered the subcontinent were absorbed into the new nation. Royal titles with the Princely States were abolished.

Despite these turbulent years Harinder clung onto and enhanced his family wealth and property. So much so that his wealth was legendary. The splendor included a fort, palaces, land, an airport, a mansion surrounded by area of land in the heart of New Delhi, a stable of luxury cars and a £110 million collection of gold, diamond encrusted jewelry with rubies and emeralds. Harinder had married and had a son and 3 daughters. Tragedy was not far from the horizon. In 1981 Harinder's only son died in a road accident. Harinder fell into a long and unending depression which ultimately led to his death.

Who would believe within days of the death of Harinder his wife and daughters found themselves virtually penniless. How could this arise?

Following the death of Harinder a will was produced. The will set up a Trust effectively naming and benefiting all the family servants and advisers and excluding the deceased's wife and daughters.

Eventually the family sought legal advise and thus began a legal fight which to date has lasted 24 years. The family argued that his trusted aides exploited Harinder grief to cheat the family out of his fortune and that in fact Harinder never made a will.

In July 2013 an Indian Court has ruled that the will of Harinder Singh Brar, the last Maharajah of Faridkot was fabricated. In an extraordinary conclusion the Maharajah's two surviving daughters have won a legal battle to claim their £2.6 billion inheritance.

A fascinating insight into a world few of us are ever likely to encounter.



However there are basic lessons we can all learn from this tale.

1. It is important everybody makes a Will.
2. Ensure that the Will is prepared by a Solicitor.
3. If you are excluded from a Will of someone close to you or limited provision is made for you seek the advise of a Solicitor immediately. There are strict short time provisions for making a claim and or contesting a Will.
4. In our experience a home made Will can be a recipe for disaster. Seek the advise of a Solicitor who will be able to guide and advice on such matters.

