

Guru Teg Bahadur's Martyrdom: Moral Tradition Vs Speculation

The article by Sardar Sher Singh, regarding Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji's Martyrdom [SR Jan, 2008] is utterly confusing, derogatory and even uncalled for. He has tried to undo the whole historic belief of the Indians' in general and the Sikhs in particular. In current times some scholars have only one motive: to establish the separate identity of the Sikhs, determined to break all links with India's Hindu community. I remember 30 years ago, Dr. Fauja Singh, an acknowledged historian wrote an article on this subject which negated the historic fact of Guru Tegh Bahadur offering to sacrifice himself for the cause of freedom of conscience (*'Tilak Janju'* being symbolic). There was a great hue and cry then, and many Sikhs scholars refuted his version. After a protracted debate Dr. Fauja Singh withdrew his theory and expressed regret.

Sardar Sher Singh has similarly tried to minimize the unique sacrifice of the Ninth Guru. For the first time he has brought forth Baba Ram Rai into this Episode. If we go by his version, then the Guru's martyrdom will not stand on that high pedestal that has been believed all over the world. Sardar Sher Singh has further distorted Sikh history by quoting dubious Muslim scholars - and sundry spies - who wrote that Guru Teg Bahadur had been "indulging in unlawful acts" which called for action on the part of the Mughal emperor.

As Chairman of the Minority Commission, I had to get such portions deleted from the text books produced by NCERT which were derogatory and misleading. Now Sardar Sher Singh tried to cull out evidence to prove that NCERT's earlier version was correct! I wonder how the Sikh scholars have not yet taken any notice of this unpardonable act of Sardar Sher Singh who is trying to change the basic concept of martyrdom.

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Human Rights & Sikhs

Kindly recall my article in SR: January 2008. One serious historical error has crept in at page 58. The quotation of Bulle Shah about which I wrote, viz, "*Agar na hote Guru Gobind Singh*" has been ascribed to Lala Daulat Rai. In fact, Lala Daulat Rai wrote a book "*Sahib-e-Kamal Guru Gobind Singh Ji*". The quotation which I incorporated in my article is on the first page of the book, and the same had been attributed to Bulle Shah.

I therefore, request you to publish this correction in the next issue so that this famous quote is correctly ascribed.

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The Sikh Rehat Maryada

The SGPC may re-examine the text and clear some concepts including VAR SRI BHAGAUTI JI KI. Who is Sri Bhagauti? In SR Feb. 08, the article "The Tradition of Guruship in Sikh religion" written by Dr. Prithipal Singh, is interesting. However, some mistakes have crept in. First, is on page 50, in second paragraph it has been written that Eighth Guru died of small pox. I think we must not use the term "victim" in case of Guru Sahib because he was the 'glorious physician.'

Secondly, at the last of the same paragraph, it has been written wrong that Lakhi Shah Vanjara was the one who discovered the 9th Master. But indeed it was Makhan Shah

Lubhana. In the next lines, there were 33 claimants, but I think these were 22 in number.

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Unruly Processions!

Sir, I read Sr. Bhupinder Singh's article on celebrations in '*The Sikh Review*' and fully agree with the views expressed by him. In my city on the day of the *nagar kirtan*, which used to be a procession with discipline, with volunteers doing their jobs well, it has now turned chaotic and indisciplined.

We see young boys on motorbikes, with naked swords in their hands brandishing. In front of the procession, boys fire crackers, and do not take care of the senior citizens passing by. They enter shops, or malls, in groups, and behave indecently.

As a child I had seen a long rope right from the beginning to the end of the procession being manned by volunteers, so that people move in the right way, and one side, so the traffic is not affected.

Committee members should join together before the *nagar kirtan* and plan, in advance, the route and the manner it will proceed. But on the *nagar kirtan* day there are no volunteers, and it is a bad show. It would be nice if the committee members decide to hold the *nagar kirtan* on Sunday, since offices are closed, with less traffic, and people are not put to inconvenience.

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Free Masonry Honour

I was pleased to read in the February issue that your Rep. in Kenya S. Mohan Singh Padam has been honoured with Masonic rank of Past Grand Standard Bearer. I would like to offer him my heartiest congratulation on his worthy achievement.

Just a small correction. HRH Michael Duke of Kent, KG, GCMG, GCVO, ADC is the Most Worshipful Grand Master of United Grand Lodge of England. He is not, as stated, the younger son of HH Prince Charles and late Princess Diana. He is the first cousin of Her Majesty The Queen.

I have been a Freemason for over 44 years and I was the youngest ever person to get the Chair of KENYA GATE LODGE, Mombasa, Kenya in 1974. Whilst in England, I received the same above honour in 1994 and I am the only Sikh in the UK holding this rank.

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Editorial: Road to Freedom

Dear Sir, - This has reference to the editorial in January 2008 issue. In my humble opinion, the line: "Also included in the gifts was a handwritten copy of the Dasam

Granth" should read "Adi Granth" and not "Dasam Granth". Even ardent supporters of Dasam Granth agree that it was compiled by Bhai Mani Singh Ji, about 20 years after the demise of Sri Guru Gobind Singh ji.

Consequently, the line " the Dasam Granth is preserved upto this day", should read as "the Adi Granth is preserved upto this day".

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Australia's Apology to Aborigines

Sir, when I read the news-item on Australian apology to the Aborigines, two things came to my mind spontaneously: First, that Hon'ble Mr. Kevin Rudd, the Prime Minister is a courageous and conscientious statesman who broke the rigid white man's code and apologized to his country's Aborigines for maltreatment and excesses of the past governments.

Secondly, I wished the Indian government and parliament had displayed similar courage to apologize to the Sikhs for the pogrom of 1984 and the ignoble Operation Bluestar and subsequent operations carried out in the name of flushing out of extremists.'

The trauma and suffering arising from governmental action - whether in Australia or India - cannot ever be erased. At least by acknowledging the "great strain on the nation's soul" as Mr. Rudd put it; the process of healing has been started. If there are "Stolen Generations" of Aborigines in Australia there are similarly "Stolen Generations" of Sikhs in India who lost everything: family, possessions, property in these government-abetted pogroms. These actions, and false portrayal of Sikhs by the government controlled media ["threat to the nation"] the loot, plunder, in the name of teaching the Sikhs a lesson have to be righted.

We can only hope that the Parliament and the government of India get a lesson from the courageous act of Australia and use it as springboard to put a healing touch to wounded psyche of the Sikhs.

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Population of Sikhs

This is on the subject of Demography of Sikhs (SR: Jan 08). Sardar Tarlochan Singh MP has shown leadership by taking a stand against a section of our leadership and organizations who narrow down the Sikh population reducing it from 20 to 22 million (estimates) to a mere 5 millions. If such attempts succeed, history will be justified in reporting it to be a case of partial genocide, in which great majority of Sikhs who accept - and believe in the path shown by Sri Guru Granth Sahib, would be ignored for sake of a few privileges benefiting some. Sikh historians and friends of the Sikhs everywhere in the world may not forgive those behind another "holocaust" of this sort imposed upon the Sikhs.

We should be proud of the large number of Sikhs scattered all over the world with a

wide diversity of cultures and life styles who are loyal to Guru Nanak and his successors as well as the holy Granth. The light of the Guru Granth is for the world and for the world community who will treasure it for all times to come, in spite of "genocidal challenges" that we often face in our history. It is not the first time that some of our leaders sold the community's future to the rulers of the time for meager monetary or other rewards.

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Intimations of Sikhism in the South

Thank you for sending me the press cutting about Nanak Ram Guda, in Andhra. This locality is in the vicinity of Golkonda Fort, it was the capital of Golkonda dynasty, ruled by the Qutab Shahi Kings. Aurangzeb annexed the state in his kingdom. One of the Governors, Nawab Qamar Uddin Ali Khan however declared independence of this territory as Hyderabad, and founded the present Nizam's dynasty. Nanak Ram was a Jagirdar of his successor Nizam. This village is named after him. The Singhs of that particular area and land are, however, Rajputs. No Sikh is residing in that area. This place is not connected with Sri Guru Nanak Sahib Ji, or the Sikhs.

Of course, Shri Guru Nanak Sahib visited this place during his travels in the south. In some histories his visit to Golkonda is mentioned. I very much appreciate that you have such a keen concern and eye on the Sikh issues. In fact I have been always inspired by people like you and that is how you are my ideal. May Wahe Guru Sahib bless you with good health and long life to guide us in the Panthic matters!

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Population of the Sikhs

I have gone through Dr. Grewal's article on Sikh Tribes (SR: Jan. 2008). I appreciate his efforts to collect data of the 'ignored Sikhs' as well as their background. It is supposing that no efforts have been made by SGPC or any university to know these "other Sikhs" including Sikhligarh, Vanjaras, etc.

Although some Sikh scholars know through history books that a Vanjara Sikh in crisis showed courage to take control of the head of Sri Guru Tegh Bahadur, unfortunately the Sikh societies of Punjab have not come forward to ensure the welfare of these Sikhs. The price of this neglect had been that these Sikhs have not been enumerated as Sikhs in the census of the country rather they are classified as "Nomadic Scheduled Tribes". Had they been classified under the head "Sikhs', the population would have

been much more than just two crores - in the census of the year 2001.

Now is the time to make efforts by all different Sikh organizations in India specially, SGPC, DSGMC to chalk out programme of providing education and establishing gurdwaras and to provide literature on Sikh religion. I have seen Sikligar solemnising marriage by taking Lavans' by placing Gurbani Gutkas alongwith Karah Prasad, etc. This shows that they still have some knowledge of Sikh religion as well as faith. They are found 'Keshadhari', although they are poor but they earn their livelihood by small artisan jobs.

I have knowledge of a society from Chandigarh making efforts to look after the religious, educated needs of these Sikhs. It is a very small effort but still commendable. International Sikh Conferation, Chandigarh, has embarked upon an ambitious programme of spread of education amongst the Sikhs. ISC must see that they reach and take control of providing education to these Sikhs.

The second most important concern is to see that the Sikhs are imparted knowledge about Sikh religion as well as Sikh Rehat Maryada.

It will be a great achievement by the ISC if they can make these Sikhs aware to record themselves as 'Sikhs' at the time of the census of 2011. The effort to educate and make these Sikh aware to record as Sikhs is to be started right now. Since there is not much time for the 2011 census.

It the duty of all the Sikh organisations to make efforts to bring these Sikhs into the fold of Sikh religion. Otherwise they will be exploited for conversion by societies of other religions. We must understand the situation before we lose these Sikhs for ever.

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Recalling Gurmat Memories

I received January 2008 issue of *The Sikh Review*, it was nice of you to include the obituary of late Dr. Chanan Singh ji in the same. I am indeed indebted to your - goodself for improving upon the language and sequence keeping the substance intact.

I also received your ealier letter dated 28.12.2007 mentioning about England's cricketer Monty Panesar. Though I do not know him personally, but I feel a sense of pride in his high class and precise bowling, his humble nature and above all his maintaining Sikh identity with un-shorn hair (saabat soorat) in an environment of entirely different culture and way of life. I wish him more & more success.

While going down memory lane I remember two noble gentlemen whose articles appeared in The Sikh Review in late ninetees. First, Prof. JR Bhimrahw, who incidentally, taught me Mechanical Engg. at Delhi College of Engg. (then Delhi Polytechnic) in the mid fifties. He not only had impeccable quality in teaching, but he was also an outstanding human being. He guided us to lead a life of high moral values and be good to everyone without inhibition. A gold medalist from Punjab Engg. College, Mughalpura, Lahore, he retired as Head of Engineering Deptt. and then continued as visiting professor at Birla College of Engg. Pilani (Rajasthan). I wrote him a letter, but was not lucky to get a reply.

The second talented and dedicated person I could trace through *The Sikh Review* is **Shri Jai Prakash Nanda** who was my colleague at the public sector fertilizer plant during our initial years of service period of 1956-1961. During our training period at Sindri (Bihar) he would go to the local gurdwara on every Sunday evening and recite kirtan, with tabla and harmonium and one more trainee engineers, Harinder Singh Oberoi, used to accompany him occasionally. After reading his article in *The Sikh Review*, I wrote to him. He not only sent a reply immediately but also visited Surat and stayed with me for two days. He took retirement as chief engineer from the fertilizer factory and devoted full time to reciting Gurbani kirtan at many places in the country. During his stay at Surat he told me that he is a close relative of Dr. (Bhai) Harbans Lal ji. If I recall correctly, Bhai Harbans Lal ji was President of All India Sikh Students Federation in my school days in Punjab.

Taking inspiration from Sri Jai Prakash ji Nanda, I took retirement from a chemical factory near Surat in 1998, when I was vice-president (Tech) there, and became a regular at Gurdwara Nanak Wadi- udhna, Surat. I also started part-time professional job as a chartered engineer.

The Gurdwara Sangat advised me to manage the Gurdwara accounts. I also looked after the library established in memory of my wife, late Gurmeet Kaur. When I suffered a mild paralytic attack, I could no longer continue with these beneficent responsibilities. Now I have recovered to the extent that I am able to look after my daily chores and do some minor professional job from my house. I am thankful to Almighty God for bestowing this favour on a 'sinner'!

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The Legendary Sr. Khushwant Singh

I have seen the review of "Train to Pakistan" by Khushwant Singh, first made by the well-known Sudheer Apte of Boston, USA and later by Ms Manjyot Kaur. (SR Jan. 2008)

S. Khushwant Singh is one of our most favourite writers, and we value his enormous contribution to Sikh history literature and to humanity at large.

With my personal experience of 1947 partition of the country, I have put down my experiences of communal madness in black and white. It has been highly appreciated all around. It adds the missing links to the romantic tale, set out in the celebrated author's book.

All religions are based on the welfare of humanity. They make us human, else they have very little purpose to perform.

I feel, my experience can be shared by others, to judge the human pulse in 1947, at the time of the independence of India and its division into two countries.

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