

1984: *Ghalughara* III

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Justice (Retd.) Ranjit Singh Narula, Former Chief Justice, Punjab & Haryana High Court, and a jurist of eminence, published an article under the heading "*The Ghalughara – 1984*" in *The Sikh Review* [Vol. 48:9, September 2000] where in he raised 36 questions (he stated that he had a hundred more questions to be asked) to the Commission - indeed the Government - must answer. The commission was created by the Government of Delhi State, which, on May 08, 2000, assigned to Justice Nanavati for addressing all issues relating to the 1984 massacre of the Sikhs.

Previously commissions were created but their reports were either suppressed by government or their findings were completely ignored. This commission seems to be the latest one, probably to delay (or just whitewash?) the actual record, like those of the earlier commission's enquiries, and thus fool the Sikhs again. While the Sikhs in India may not be able to extract justice from the previous or the present Government in power, the Sikhs settled abroad in the western democracies have the responsibility of keeping up this issue of 1984 Sikh *Ghalughara* alive and should continue to do their best to not let this issue die or be swept away under the rug.

There are a number of thoughts comes to my mind which I would like to emphasize here in my review article.

1. This is the first time I have seen in writing the appropriate word "*Ghalughara*" being used for the 1984 massacre of Sikhs, although I have been using this term for a long time. There have been three *Ghalugharas* in Sikh history so far. The first one is called *chhota Ghalughara*, or the Minor Holocaust of June 1746 at Kahnuwan, wherein more than ten thousand Sikhs were liquidated under the Mughal invasion instigated by Lakhpat Rai. Second one is called *vadda Ghalughara*, or the Great Holocaust, of February 1762, wherein more than twenty thousands of Sikhs were massacred during the invasion of Ahmed Shah Abdali, partly because the Sikhs had been taken by surprise in treachery, being prepared inadequately in anticipation of the attack.
2. The third one in 1984 should be called (*saab ton vadda*) or the Great holocaust of 1984 where many more than 20,000 of Sikhs were killed by their own countrymen under the tacit direction of the then Indian Government. The suddenness with which the attacks came from their own government all over the country took the Sikhs by surprise.

Therefore, I believe that Sikhs must recognize the 1984 massacre as the THIRD *Ghalughara* and clearly say so in their history books. They should not allow others to write Sikh history for their future generations. Some one very aptly said, "Sikhs make history but do not write history". They do a lot of sacrifices and make history but then tend to leave to others (Non-Sikhs or those who do not cherish fondness for Sikh history

or Philosophy) to write Sikh history. I am relieved to know that an eminent and most reliable person, like Justice (Retd.) Ranjit Singh Narula, Chief Justice, in Punjab & Haryana High Court, used the correct word, *Ghalughara*, for the tragic events of 1984.

3. A quick review of 36 questions does raise a series of doubts about complicity and conspiracy of the then Indian government Officials, including even the very top ones:

- **Hiding the truth about the third person involved at the killing scene of Indira Gandhi (could he probably be the one who had killed Indira Gandhi and then instigated Hindu mobs to attack Sikhs)**
- **Disarming and taking Sikh Police personnel off the streets just before the Ghalughara**
- **Plotting to confiscate Sikh Kirpans, instigate and help Hindu mobs to kill Sikhs, destroy Sikh property and religious places, adopt illegal methods of not recording individual complaints (FIR) of separate incidents (but to lump all into one single case).**
- **Forcing top police officers, fire officials and transportation officials to cooperate with Rajiv Gandhi, Narasimha Rao, H.K.L.Bhagat, and other high Congress Ministers and officials in the full blown conspiracy to kill Sikhs**
- **Deliberately ignoring calls from victims to the high government officials for rescue operations, despite high officials receiving horrific reports of large scale murders of Sikhs**
- **Turning down the request of even Police Commissioner for deploying army on November 1, and**
- **Not taking any action against the guilty police and other high officials (including Congress Party Ministers), while talking loudly in public about providing full justice to the victims**

If India calls itself a democracy and wants to prove to the world that it is committed to these ideals, it is high time that India learn a lesson from USA on how to uphold the fundamental principles of democracy. There were 19 Muslim terrorists who did the horrific act of attacking the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, killing more than 3000 Americans on September 11, 2001. Yet, U.S.A did not abandon its laws and followed the true democratic traditions even under the worst circumstances. It did not allow any intimidation of Muslims in USA. It did not encourage hate-groups of any nationality to resort to violence. The U.S President even went to a Muslim Mosque, assuring the Muslims of their safety and security. The President focused his attention on punishing only the perpetrators/terrorists of the crime. A few incidents of hate crimes (committed by the majority community in USA) against the minorities are being vigorously pursued to punish those who committed those crimes.

Could India not have followed this precedent in 1984 to avoid killing thousands of innocent Sikhs following the assassination of Indira Gandhi? Is India behaving any differently today within the context of Muslim massacre of Gujarat? When will India learn to protect its citizens and behave in a civilized manner before it could claim to be a democratic country?

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