

“Jô Bolé Sô Nihâl” – Controversy

Sir, Apropos the controversy regarding “JO BOLE SO NIHAL”, in a multiethnic society it is imperative that a community’s sensitivities are respected by the Press. It is regrettable when a particular community, or ethnic group, is targeted specifically. It is generally noticed that in T.V. serials and films, the sensitivity of the Sikh community and religion is not given proper consideration. Making fun of a community as a whole, or hurting the religious sentiments, is not a laughable matter. It can result in nothing but discord and disharmony in the society leading to serious consequences. The Indian public doesn’t need to be reminded that mocking at Duryodhan by Draupadi resulted in the Mahabharat war!

Likewise, the Government Regulatory Bodies, like the Film Censor Board, have to appreciate such sentiments and take due care so that they do not tread on sensitive religious issues.

We have noticed that The Hindustan Times has been playing an irresponsible role in regard to Sikh community. Sometimes ‘freedom of speech’ is taken to be the pretext and sometime genuine protest by our community is taken in a funny way. We advise the H.T. Editor to be more circumspect.

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“Avtar”

Sir - In the Members Forum (SR June 2005) the scholarly letter of S. Tarsem Singh, regarding my essay on ‘Avtar’, demonstrates his deep study of the Scripture. The learned writer has given references of Bhai Gurdas and the *Bhatt vani* to emphasise his belief in ‘the Formless Lord took form’. At the same time, he correctly cautions *that gurbani does not vouch for the idea that Guru was an incarnation.....Gurus were above these frailities.*

It only proves hard convictions are difficult to change and one feels comfortable with the rooted ideas. Debating on such matter is not only futile but odious. Bhai Gurdas is quoted to have stated, ‘*Guru Nanak jag mahe pathaiya.*’ *Pathaiya* can never mean incarnation of God! Nor were the Bhattas ‘commissioned’ to make Sikhs ‘*to know and venerate the Gurus.*’ The Bhattas being impressed with the Gurus, eulogised them, and used the poetic form popular at that time, called the *qasidah*, which praised the benefactor to no ends. There are scores of such eulogies by Persian and Hindi poets, as in other languages, where the poets have rated the kings and eminent persons as well as the saints and Sufi/*darveshes* equal to gods. The Bhattas’ praise worthy verses were found fit for inclusion in the compilation of the Holy Volume by Guru Arjun Devji. It will be a travesty of truth to credit the *Bhattas* as the ‘primary source’ of understanding *Gurmat*. The Holy Gurus never claimed, even once in Guru Granth Sahib about their being ‘incarnations’ of Lord Rama or Sri Krishna who were, in turn, said to be incarnations of Lord Vishnu. On the other hand,

they firmly and repeatedly denounced the theory of divine incarnation, refer the *Bij mantra* itself. Guru Gobind Singh said, “*Jo mujh ko parmeswar ucharenh, te sab narak kund mein parhen*”. For a Sikh, the creation is all Divine *Jagat tamasa*.

Regarding the correct and just interpretation of the *bhagats* and *bhatts bani*, let the following insertions be pondered over in depth. Vithal is an incarnation of Vishnu:

ਈਭੈ ਬੀਠਲੁ ਉਭੈ ਬੀਠਲੁ ਬੀਠਲੁ ਬਿਨੁ ਸੰਸਾਰੁ ਨਹੀ ॥
(*Bhagat Nam dev*) [SGGS 485]

Baba Sheikh Farid says authoritatively in the pages of Sri Guru Granth:

ਫਰੀਦਾ ਬੇ ਨਿਵਾਜਾ ਕੁਤਿਆ ਏਹ ਨ ਭਲੀ ਰੀਤਿ ॥
ਕਬਹੀ ਚਲਿ ਨ ਆਇਆ ਪੰਜੇ ਵਖਤ ਮਸੀਤਿ ॥

[SGGS 1381]

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Read, write & speak Punjabi – Proudly

Sir - The maximum shabads in Sri Guru Granth Sahib are in Punjabi. Mostly Kabir Ji's *bani* (shabads) are in Punjabi. It proves that Punjabi is as old as 900 years, rather more.

Sikhs go to their school i.e. Gurdwara as students in order to learn from their Guru, and practice. ਸੁਣਿਐ (Suniai), ਮਮਨੈ (Mannai). If Sikh listens and obeys and practices, then only he goes to higher classes. Is it possible without knowledge of Punjabi?

If parents speak Punjabi at home, it becomes a preparatory K.G. class. At school, let Punjabi continue side by side with English in upper classes. Sikh ladies should come forward for this classic sewa. 25% of Gurdwaras income should be spent on teaching children Punjabi and Sikhi. Gurdwara Bhai Sahib Ji should be rewarded for the purpose, or a teacher be appointed.

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The 'Kanishka' Crash: the partisan Press

Sir - While we in India proudly proclaim our credentials of justice and truth, in practice, there is no compassion for the victims of the 1984 massacre of Sikhs. The Community was massacred, maligned and branded extremists. The victims' families suffer till today. More than one commission could not bring to book, the hundreds of

culprits and killers. Even the Parliament remained insensitive and never condoled the mass murder of innocents, while some of the guilty enjoy prominent positions in government.

Now, 21 years later, the government and the callous media have been 'outraged' at the acquittal of two Canadian Sikhs in the judicial trial of 'Kanishka' accused, rather than respect the judicial verdict.

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Attempt to Desecrate Scripture Text?

Sir: Close on the heels of the scuttling the Golden Temple Heritage" proposed by UNESCO, comes the disturbing report regarding interference with the Holy Text of Sri Guru Granth Sahib. Through an interview, last month, with Prof Darshan Singh (ex Jathedar Sri Akal Takht) on the Local *Gurbani* TV Program, we in Canada learnt that some outsider had been hired in mid 1970's for removal and alteration of "Lag Matras" of SGGS. He is said to have completed the malevolent exercise upto 750 pages of SGGS. A booklet has reportedly been published on Japji Sahib from Gurdwara Rakab Ganj.

In my opinion it is a dangerous exercise fraught with far-reaching consequences for the Sikh Faith. We are aware that the meaning of a word or sentence changes completely if these *Lag Matras* are deleted. It amounts to an attempt to dilute the purity of Sikh Theology. It also negates what Guru Angad Dev Ji did for establishing Gurmukhi as the standard script. Through your esteemed journal, I request Sikhs to raise their voice against any alternation of text of Shri Guru Granth Sahib. Indeed an enquiry should be held to know the whole truth. Sikh lawyers of repute should come forward to assist such an enquiry.

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Documentary on Darbar Sahib

My hearty congratulation to Mr. Ramesh K. Seth on making a documentary on Darbar Sahib. Is there some way that the documentary in the form of CD/DVD/Video Cassettes could be made available, at cost? That way his laudable services could be disseminated widely. The SGPC should indeed encourage research on various aspects of 'Sikhism', its history, monuments, important shrines and leading personalities, past and present, who have made notable contribution in promoting the noble 'Sikh ideals'. Devotees like Mr Seth who want to make a documentary on any such subject for the benefit of SIKH Sangat should have ready access to such

data. That could be the starting point for their efforts and, if necessary, supplement this available data with further research.

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Interpreting Gurbani

Sir: Apropos Satta-Balwand Var (SR May 2005), I have some experience as editor of a Science Journal. **We must check all information that appears to be contrary to the accepted norms of the discipline.** In case of Gurbani, we tend to assume 'encyclopaedic knowledge' of our faith, without making any effort to study it seriously. Being more involved in *Karmkand*, and *Haumai'n*, we consider ourselves competent to comment on every thing in a casual way.

The English translations of Sri Guru Granth Sahib by scholars: Manmohan Singh, Dr Gopal Singh and Principal Gurbachan Singh Talib, may not be perfect, but these are sufficient guide for a lay Sikh who wants to use these for meanings of gurbani. If everybody starts claiming he/she knows better than these three Sikh scholars without spending time [years of in-depth study], energy [looking for every alternative interpretation within the fundamental boundaries defined by our Gurus] and consultation with people working in the profession besides, literature in the library, then only Satguru can help them to be Gurmukhs or *Manmukhs*! In Science there is a system of three or more referees for comments on an article or paper before its publication. I have spent my entire professional life in India and know this well. I always get solace from universal wisdom.

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Maharaja Ranjit Singh Remembered

Sir: Permit me offer corrections to the speech of Sr. Tarlochan Singh - MP, [SR June, 2005] which errs on the historical facts and seems fashioned to please Sir Michael Arthur, who was present on the occasion. Since you have chosen to publish it in your esteemed monthly, I request you to make factual corrections, e.g. regarding award of Victoria Cross to 21 Sikh martyrs of Saragarhi fame. Victoria Cross, the most coveted of all decorations of the British Empire, was instituted in 1856 to honour the acts of gallantry of British soldiery in the Crimean war. It was **not** made applicable to the British Indian forces till World War I (1914-1918). The first Indian to win this medal was Sepoy Khuda Dad Khan - VC of the 129th Duke of Connaught's Owen Regiment on 31st October, 1914 at Hollebeka in Belgium. The Medal was presented to him by King George V personally at the Battlefield. Since then, a total of 49 Indian have won this medal. Out of these, five were Sikhs, namely:

- 1) Jemadar Gian Singh VC - 5 Sikh.
- 2) Lt. Karamjeet Singh Judge VC - 15th Punjab Regh.

- 3) Naib Sub. Nand Singh MVC, VC - 11 Sikh
- 4) Hav. Parkash Singh VC - 8 Punjab Regt.
- 5) Second Lt. (Lt. General) Premindra Singh Bhagat, PVSM, VC - Engineers

No martyrs of Saragarhi fame was awarded VC. Please let the honourable MP corrects his facts, if not his views.

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