

'Outrageous distortion of Sikh history'

Apropos Dr. Rajinder Singh's article on 'distortion of Sikh history' [SR: May '07 issue] he makes an exhaustive analysis - and convincingly demolished the attempts - of some Namdhari scholars at bending the Sikh saga to suite their limited purpose. Giving them their due, despite their propaganda, the Namdhari heads have - fortunately - not made any addition, or alterations in the Adi Granth, as canonized by Guru Gobind Singh Ji at Damdama Sahib. Indeed the cult reveres SGGS as their Holy Scripture. **All the same, overwhelming majority of Sikhs neither take their propaganda seriously nor consider them as a threat to mainline Sikhism, unlike - for instance - pseudo-Nirankaris, Ashutoshees, Bhaneranwale, Sachasauda, and other sects, who though not choosing a continuity route, have yet made far more significant and increasingly serious inroads.**

On the point of Guru Gobind Singh Ji's last days and his death, DRS could perhaps look more objectively at Sukha Singh and other writers' assertion that Guru Gobind Singhji, in fact, did not die at Nanded on Oct 7th 1708, but simply rode off after a contrived cremation which, it is claimed, did not yield the usual ashes. Let us admit that this is not an ordinary aspect that took place at the most crucial juncture of Sikh history, when 239 years period of evolution under Ten Gurus ended, and Sikhism formally came on its own.

Any controversy or inconsistency here would not be simply imputed to Guru's mystique to modern educated masses, who - understandably - perceive it as our version of Da Vinci Code bugging the Christian world today. To any discerning 21st century student of Sikh History this would appear to be a point which brings about a dignified closure to the glorious legacy started by Guru Nanak Devji in 1469 AD, with its charge finally passing over to Adi Granth, thereafter designated as Guru Granth Sahib, and the Sikh Sangat. Just preceding this point, Guru Gobind Singhji spent one full year along with Mogul ruler Bahadur Shah (July 1707 thru August 1708) where he no doubt made reality checks on various policy aspects being preached and practiced in Sikhism to see if any course correction was indeed need of the hour.

It will be relevant to recall here that at the same point of history, Banda Singh Bahadur - the personality of corresponding age, absolutely committed to basic Sikhism, left these very environs for Punjab. His initial destination, as history tells us, were Sonapat, Samana and Sirhind where he - with vengeance - delivered 'Summary -Retributive-Justice' (SRT) to those who were involved in martyring Guru Teg Bahadur, Sahibzadas and deceitfully betrayed the Tenth Master despite solemn oaths on the holy 'Quran' that were jettisoned as soon as he left the Anandpur Fort to honour the agreements. Subsequently, Banda established a Sikh kingdom encompassing a substantial part of East Punjab, thereby giving the Sikh Diaspora a first hand experience (and taste) of freedom, at being masters of their own destiny, for about six years, at the end of which he bravely chose martyrdom, rather than any compromise of the high Sikh values which now included two new additions, namely (a) No mercy for enemies of the Panth, (b) Religion cannot survive without governance.

The story that, this 'Greatest Knight in Shining Armor,' who appeared at most significant juncture of history to provide a dynamic leadership to the Sikh masses

who were a defeated and demoralized lot, gradually slipping back to Brahminical asceticism and led them from front to dramatically enforce SRT, and actually conquered a sizeable territory to restore their self confidence, was in fact an outsider - a Tantric, Madho Das Bairagi, is even less plausible than what self serving Namdhari scholars have attempted to put out - rather harmlessly! Moreover, it would be sacrilegious even to remotely perceive that great Guru Gobind Singh simply fell victim within his own camp to two "Supari killers" carrying traditional hand-held weapons!

For sake of argument, if needed, it was the Bairagi, who actualized, the then mostly theoretical philosophy, or concept at social reform, handed down by Ten Gurus, and enumerated - in in perpetuity- in our holy Scriptures, then admittedly, **he applied and demonstrated on the ground that it can be made to operate as a successful working model for a progressive and thriving welfare society.** Admittedly his contribution of forcing Summary-Retributive-Justice, though not sanctioned by the Scripture (as for example in Islamic 'Quran') left an indelible mark on the Sikh psyche, and ever since, no tormentors of Sikhism, be it Massa Rangar, Sir Michael O'Dwyer, Lahore Police Chief Sanders, or, more recent perpetrators of Operation Blue Star, have been spared this vengeance.

It can be stated without fear of contradiction that his contribution to Sikhism, as it has evolved today is unparalleled. **Accordingly, let us give Baba Banda Singh his due place of honour along with others heroes, rather than a benign neglectful attitude we have thus far shown to him in our remembrance, by way of Gurburbs and Ardas, etc.**

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The Nankana Sahib School

This has reference to an article on the local school at Nankana Sahib. [SR June 07 – P. 48] by Australia's S. Manmohan Singh Baveja. Kindly advise how one can make a contribution and to whom should the money be remitted.

Regarding tall talk by former president of SGPC about the future of the school the less said the better. About a couple of years ago, she had gone to Pune (Maharashtra) where she promised a grant of Rs 15 lakhs to the university for establishment of a chair for Sikh studies. The university issued an appeal through **The Sikh Review** for contributions. I sent a cheque of Rs 5000/-. But the cheque lapsed! The reason assigned was that SGPC never paid the promised grant so they could not open any account towards the chair. What a pity!

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Takhts: Seats of Temporal Authority

A study of the history of Takhts reveals an interesting – and intriguing – information that is – herewith – shared with readers of your esteemed Monthly. It has been recorded that (1a), “Above all, a Hukamnamah was obtained from the Akal Takht, Amritsar, on March 18, 1887, excommunicating Professor Gurmukh Singh from the Panth. A similar Hukamnamah was issued (by Khem Singh Bedi) each from Takht Kes Garh (Anandpur Sahib), Takht Patna Sahib (Bihar), Takht Dam Dama Sahib (Talwandi Sabo), and Takht Hazoor Sahib (Abchal Nagar, Nanded), in the name of Sikh Sangat.”

No evidence regarding issue of a hukamnamah in 1887 A.D. from Gurdwara Dam-Dama Sahib, is available (2-i). However, in 1940 a request was made by Malwa Central Sikh Board to the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak committee, for inclusion of Dam Dama Sahib in Ardas (2-ii). Despite the efforts of Jathedar Basant Singh, the Akali Dal was in no mood to take over the control of Gurdwara Dam Dama Sahib by SGPC (2-iii). Maybe, there was a deal between Akali Dal and the then Maharaja of Patiala, whose relatives were controlling and using the property of Gurdwara Dam Dama Sahib (2-iv). Under the patronage of Maharaja of Patiala, the Shahzadpur Family related to him, kept Gurdwara Dam Dama Sahib as a personal Jagir, and was averse to the idea of it being raised to the status of a Takht (2-v).

The existence of Four Takhts is mentioned in the inaugural meeting of Singh Sabha held on October 1, 1873 [1b]. This inconsistency regarding the existence of Five Takhts during the expulsion of Professor Gurmukh Singh in March 1887 needs the attention of Sikh historians.

According to the information available on internet [3], Gurdwara Dam-Dama Sahib (Talwandi Sabo) was officially recognized as Fifth Takht by SGPC, Amritsar on November 18, 1966, vide its Resolution number 32. This discrepancy in historical information, and use of name of Dam Dama Sahib as Fifth Takht by Khem Singh Bedi for his selfish motives to be accepted is an unfortunate tale of incompetence of Sikh leadership in 19th century. This needs the attention of Dr. Sangat Singh, in the revised edition of his book, if considered appropriate.

Educating the younger generation of Sikhs is crucial, since availability of correct and authentic information may be helpful in arousing their curiosity and keen interest in their faith; that is likely to inspire them for deeper study of Sikh history.

Assistance of Dr. Joginder Singh Ahluwalia and Dr. Inderpal Singh Sandhu is gratefully acknowledged.

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References:

1. Sangat Singh, *The Sikhs in History*, (Uncommon Books, New Delhi, 3rd edition, 1999) (1a) p 141-42, (1b) p 139 [Kartar Singh and Gurdial Singh Dhillon, *Stories from Sikh History Book IX. Socio-Religious Reform Movements 1849-1947* (Hemkunt, Delhi, 1978).
2. Sukhdial Singh, *Khalsa Panth de Punj Takht*, (Daffodils Printers Patiala,) (1987), (2-i) p 138, (2-ii) p 144, (2-iii) p 145, (2-iv) pp 137 & 146, (2-v) p 137.
3. Gurdwara Dam-Dama Sahib recognized by SGPC as the Fifth Takht on November 18, 1966, vide Resolution # 32. It was declared as the Fifth Takht by the Government of India in April 1999. [Searched on internet by Dr. Joginder Singh Ahluwalia & Dr. Inderpal Singh Sandhu]

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Dagshai Public School: Gurmat Camp

Apropos the delightful report on DPS (SR: July 2007) I wish to mention that with the Grace of Sat Guru Ji (and your blessings) the 5th Gurmat Camp was held at Dagshai Public School last June. We feel grateful to you and S. Jasbir Singh 'Bir' for the permission, and whole-hearted cooperation, for holding the camp at DPS.

The campus had been blessed by S. Raghbir Singh Bir's regular *Naam-Simran*. The strong vibrations continue to inspire one and all, and the campers were very happy to be there.

The Gurmat camp was a grand success thanks to whole hearted cooperation of S. Amarjit Singh ji and Principal S. Tejinderjit Singh ji.

The number of student participants from DPS was small, but their performance was excellent. One student, Upinderjit Singh, who had shorn his *kes* earlier, decided during the camp to keep his hair uncut and follow Sat Guru's edicts in true spirit. *Ardas* to this effect was performed and campers appreciated his gesture.

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A Noble Motivation

Thank you for sending me a copy of the book "*Gur Jaisa Nahi Ko Dev*". Though it is a small booklet, it provides profound knowledge which guides us to lead a life of Gurmukh true to the teachings of our great Gurus. Chapter-wise explanation, in a simple but logical manner, helps one to get maximum of the benefits from it. I have read Bibi Satnam Kaur's earlier book: "*Daily Gurbani Routine*" which was also useful for our daily life. I have known Bibi Ji for a long time, as I used to live in Mumbai before moving to Ahmedabad after my marriage. She is doing great service for the Panth by organizing Gurbani Classes. I also admire ***The Sikh Review*** for spreading the message of Love of God among people across the world.

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