

No disrespect to Sant Bhindranwale

Sir: The Nov. 2005 issue of *The Sikh Review*, features an article by Rizvi Syed Haider Abbas who writes about the 1984 assault on the Harimandir Sahib. therein the writer makes an adverse reference to Sant Bhinderanwale as having caused assassination of “clean shaven Sikhs”, and that he was a radical who was fighting for Khalistan movement.

This is not true, as Sant Bhinderanwale vehemently denied ever killing anyone, and was never charged - or convicted - for any crime. We also know that he was supportive of the Anandpur Sahib Resolution which asked for greater autonomy for Punjab. He never asked for Khalistan. He did say however, (more in a logical sense than a prophetic one, I think) that “the foundation stone for Khalistan will be set when I am killed”.

How can *The Sikh Review* publish such articles? Had the author said that it was his opinion then it would be a different story. But he says it like a statement of fact.

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Editor's Note: On a closer reading of the said article, it will be amply clear to the writer that the observations in question had been excerpted by the writer as a quotation from a book by Shashi Tharoor: “Midnight to Millennium” to refer to the government's alleged justification for Operation Bluestar. It was not meant to hurt the Sikh sentiments.

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‘Prachin Panth Prakash’

Sir: During the time available to me in the last four years, I have translated the *Prachin Panth Prakash* written by Rattan Singh Bhangu in the middle of the 19th century. It is one of the rare documents written by a person intimately connected with the history of the period. Rattan Singh was the grandson of Bhai Mehtab Singh, and Sardar Sham Singh, head of a Misal, was his maternal grandfather. He wrote his work at a particularly crucial time of Sikh history and has had a great appeal for all. His contribution to history of the post-Guru period, about which much is not known, is considerable, waiting to be discovered. Even at the present time the great chronicler has the capability of adding a few facts to what is generally known to historians.

In 1967, I had written an analysis of the work for the Indian History Congress, which was accepted as a fresh approach by some serious students of history. A study of Rattan Singh promises to give new tools for understanding of early post-Guru period's history of the Punjab. His perceptions as a historian are of deep interest. His insights into the life and work of Banda Singh Bahadur are particularly penetrating. Ever since Bhangu has fascinated me as he fascinates many others who read him. I have always dreamed of introducing him to English knowing students of history who cannot use the original.

It appears that it will be some more time before I find a publisher, although the final draft for publication is almost ready. Meanwhile, I felt that I must not hold it from the students of history who are likely to find reading him very rewarding.

I am sending you a translation of the first hundred pages. Since yours is a magazine which is much respected by the people whose history the Panth Prakash relates, I hope you will be able to serialise it in the coming months. Should you find it worth reproducing, I will send you translation of the next hundred pages.

I hope to benefit by the comments of your enlightened readers and the learned Editorial panel. All worthwhile comments will be attended to and gratefully acknowledged in the final publication in the book form which may not be too much delayed.

With the nervousness of a novice and the fondness of a humble sewadar, I take immense pleasure in presenting a somewhat readable translation of the great Sardar Rattan Singh Bhangu's *Panth Prakash*, of which he was rightly proud.

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Maharaja Ranjit Singh's Samadhi at Lahore

Sir, - I am a regular subscriber of *The Sikh Review* and was shocked to read about Mr Farhan's experience at the samadhi [SR: Dec. 05]. Sikhism embraces all human beings. It teaches us to be tolerant, transparent and respect all those whose souls are touched by its utmost simplicity. Of course, it is human frailty to misrepresent and misinterpret the authentic teachings of Guru Baba Nanak for reasons best known to supervisors of the samadhi. Indeed human race today is suffering due to lack of deeper understanding amongst faiths thanks to ignorant care-takers who are custodian of our religious shrines. I am glad Mr. Farhan raised his voice against the caretakers of the Sikh shrines in Pakistan for the Sikh Council to intervene so that no one else feels humiliated as he did. Sometimes it takes people like Farhan to send the right message across so that they wake up from their deep slumber and truly act like caretakers and followers of Baba Nanak teachings.

The Sikh history shows many instances of the unique relationship with Muslims. How can one forget that the foundation stone of the most sacred Harmandir Sahib was laid by a Saint Mian Mir? The Golden Temple has four doors and embraces all human beings. If the Gurus who gave birth to Sikhism did not segregate the human race, then who has given the mandate to the present Gurdwara caretakers to misinterpret their teachings?

We always remember human race in our daily prayers: "Nanak Naam Chardih Kalah Tereh bhaneh sarbaat dah Bhala".

I am a Sikh and my family has been based in Tanzania for four Generations and share his hurt feelings.

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Nagar Kirtans shd. radiate love - Not war

The New Delhi edition of the *Daily Hindu*, last January 4, carried a colour picture (released by world-wide Reuters) with the caption: 'Saying it with fire'. Regrettably, this is about the Sikh procession taken out in Jammu a day before to celebrate the birthday of Guru Gobind Singh Ji.

A Nihang youth literally spewed flaming fire from his mouth. You would recall how a few months back, on birthday of Guru Nanak Dev Ji, a similar picture had appeared worldwide, showing Sikh youth playing *gatka* with naked swords. The spirituality of *Simran* and *Sewa* is nowhere shown and the real purpose of taking out the Nagar kirtan is becoming perverted by garish war-like displays.

Why are the Sikhs beant upon depicting themselves as aggressive fighters? Day in and day out Nagar Kirtan is being down graded to street processions. Non-Sikhs have started criticizing us for blocking traffic on roads. When will our 'prabandhaks' get some better sense and devise better ways to project the message of Guru Nanak Dev Ji?

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Nagar Kirtan: Blessing or Nuisance?

Sir, the January 01, procession/Nagar Kirtan in Calcutta, purporting to be a public celebration of the glorious Guru Govind Singh ji, had a negative fall-out. The trunk road was littered with plastic bags and containers in which "brunch" (*langar*?) had been served. Already crowded with the New Year revellers, the Sikh procession only snarled up the traffic and drew negative response from the public.

Why not consider "*Prabhat Pheri*" of Shabad singing groups before sunrise? Nagar Kirtan (lit. city choral) should not be turned into city's nightmare.

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