

## Love Your Mother Tongue

Sir, - The article, "Leadership turns a blind eye to Punjabi," by Dr. Jaswant Singh Sachdev, USA, has attracted my attention. His plea, that questions put forward in Punjabi, should evince reply in Punjabi, to preserve and propagate the language and the culture has depth in it. The tendency to answer in English should be checked.

The trend to more and more usage of English cannot be reversed or halted. Lord Macauley as far back as in 1835, had introduced a class of Indians, who would become interpreters between the British rulers and crores of Indians, they were governing: this class of Indians had become familiar with English., their culture and their thinking. These Indian "*baboos*" could climb the ladders of higher employment, get near to the rulers and profit, in more ways than one.

The trend towards English has continued throughout the Indian generations, even well past independence, and is to gather greater momentum. If we are to prosper and compete in the world today, the practicing world language of English, must be on our finger tips. Its mastery is essential. Knowledge of English is seen in outsourcing of work to India, China and other countries, by USA and other affluent nations, who want to cut costs and compete in the world market. Millions of Indians, who cost much less migrate to green pastures, including USA, Canada & Australia. A very good example is information technology. I need not elaborate on it.

Knowledge and use of English is routine in reasonably well placed Indian families and the figures place 300 millions in the middle class, signifying reasonable economic and education standards. Naturally it is an intermixture of languages in daily use. For example, in Punjab, we mix up Punjabi with English words or vice versa. It is the same story, throughout India. The need of the hour, makes us adjust to changing times, else we shall be left miles behind the others. The economic prosperity dictates the terms. One likes to improve one's living standards and thus use tools, which increase his work. English has acted as that vital tool.

Yeats had said, in 1935, that "Tagore does not know English, no Indian knows English. Nobody can write English with music and style, not learnt in childhood. "One is raised with the language and culture, from childhood. V.S. Naipaul has said the same thing, in "An Area of Darkness". Mahatma Gandhi had called English language influence as disastrous for Indians. English, as *lingua franca* of India, was considered as a fantastic imaginary conception, by Nehru.

Be that as it may, the compelling circumstances bring English, more and more into useage, joining South with the rest of India. Express oneself well and effectively in English, including economic, cultural and social aspects of our civilisation and all is well. Therefore let us be led profitably, with the tools in usage, in the world, to spread our culture. Dogmatism could lead to setback, including closure of our English medium, "***The Sikh Review.***"

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## Discard Casteism

Sir: I have been receiving the monthly issues of "The Sikh Review", they have been very educational. I show them to my granddad and he was pleased with the enthusiasm I have for my own religion.

Since I was a child, I have been taught that we are all one, until six months back when I learnt we have castes. I was wondering if it would be possible if you could place an article in the magazine why castes are around. Not just for our religion but for others too. In England not many people use castes, whereas some of the older generations do, then teaching their children and grandchildren the same. In my personal opinion castes are wrong. Do you think the Gurus would want this? We all are Guru's Sikhs, so we should act that way.

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## Guruvani Translation

Sir, I have carefully gone through the stanza (SR: Nov) translated from *Tukhari Baramah* by our reknowned Sikh author and historian, Khushwant Singh and wanted to share my views on the topic with other enlightened readers.

I think 'poetry to poetry' translation is in reality a problematic exercise which seldom does full justice to the original poet. It is all the more true in case of *Gurbani* because of the great difference between the spiritual level of the Poet Guru and the mortal translator.

Secondly, most of *Gurbani* is composed in Brajhasha which is notorious for epitomising much into fewer words and in an excellent way, which we very often fail to comprehend fully. A lack of knowledge of idiomatic language in certain cases may also be one factor. I know from my personal experiences how difficulties cropped up, turn by turn, when I was rendering the 'sentiments of Ram Prasad "Bismal" - a great freedom fighter - into Punjabi prosodic form. Very often the poet translates the words, but not intrinsic sentiments latent in the original. Let me quote one example from the *Adi Granth*, rendered into English by Dr. Gopal Singh "Dardi".

In *Gurbani*, Guru Arjun Dev has uttered a hymn in praise of the Almighty after his only son Hargobind's fever subsided. In common parlance in Punjab the fever still is named as *Taap*. The same word has been used by the Guru in this hymn, but the learned translator has converted it into '*affliction*' which does not stand for fever.

Similarly, Khushwant Singh could not do full justice to the original. *Bhadon* is the month of rains. The dark nights of rainy season make the situation more conducive and congenial for true lovers to enjoy the life. The woman in the prime of her youth repents over her youth being wasted by the separation from her husband to such an extent that she would rather prefer death to separation.

According to my opinion, "*Jal Thal*" means neither seas nor lakes. It means places of water such as ponds and other earth is equally full of water, or is covered with water. Khushwant Singh uses the words river/seas instead, and *Dardi* too is

closer to him saying: "though full of beauty. I grieve .... the seas are brimful. But none of these two shows the repentance" (page 1061).

I am of the opinion that one cannot enjoy the Gurbani, or grasp its essence fully, through a translation. That was perhaps why Trumpp abandoned his project halfway.

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### **"Japji - The Way of Divine"**

Sir, - This is with reference to the article "*Japji - The way of Divine*" by Dev Suroop Kaur Khalsa [SR: November 2004, pp. 62-63] The writer errs in assuming that there are 40 *pauris* in *Japji Sahib*. We all know that the number of *pauris* in *Japji Sahib* is 38. It seems the author has counted in the introductory *moolmantar* and concluding *shaloka* as *pauris*.

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### **Gurdwara Funds for S.R.**

Sir, - It is regrettable that *The Sikh Review* faces a financial crunch (SR Nov, 04) from an unexpected quarter, D.S.G.M.C. whose members always claims the committee as a mini parliament of Sikh Panth. But we should not be discouraged. Last year in your October, 2003 journal, if you recall the behavior of the Manager, as per the writing of Col, Avtar Singh, Toronto, Canada, under the heading "Guru Granth Sahib Swaroop in homes" at page 63, any one can very well understand the system of Prachar done by D.G.M.C., People (The Sadh Sangat) elect its members who have no knowledge of *Gurmat*.

You have to find some other methods to do the Prachar through and for your valuable and very useful journal. Merely paying the arrears by the DSGPC will not solve the problem of Prachar, some times a very few words tells the future of the society and this is sufficient for you to understand and better to ignore the issue for the benefit of the Panth and also we assure you that this matter will be brought in the notice of the *sangat* which will be beneficial to repair this loss.

May Akal Purakh bless you and your team to continue doing the noble cause for ever.

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