

Speculation on Sikh Ethnicity

Sir: I have gone through with interest Ishwinder Singh's letter "Sword of Sikhism": *Tribalist origin refuted*, in SR Jan 2004, (pp. 83-84). I endorse his argument. Indeed, there is no shortage of shallow scholarship in Sikhism, especially in the West, masquerading their knowledge and often linking it to the high-sounding Chairs they happen to hold in certain American Universities. Their hairbrained theories cast a sad reflection on the high sounding offices they hold, and sometimes one feels that such Universities (and Sikh ideology) could be better off without the services of such half-baked 'scholars'. Sadly, it also helps to cast a shadow over the credibility of such Universities.

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Quality Education

Sardar J. S. Sodhi P.C.S. Retd. has rightly highlighted (S.R. November 2003) the need for Sikh Schools/Colleges of high standards to provide quality education, rather than spending huge money on palatial Gurdwara buildings where attendance is very poor except on *Gurpurab* days to have *Langar*.

I quote my personal experience; I came to Gandhidham Gujarat in the year 1996 to join my son who established business here. I found 10 rooms in the Gurdwara lying vacant for the last 7 years. I persuaded the Gurdwara committee members to utilize these rooms and we a group of 4 persons decided to start a school for which I was entrusted with the job. Guru Nanak Education Trust was formed and its constitution and bylaws were framed and got registered as a society with the Registrar of Societies, Government of Gujarat and ultimately Guru Nanak Public School (English Medium) came into being in the year 1997 and got recognized from Education Department and Classes Nursery & KG started by the grace of WAHEGURU and it is flourishing to be a high school by adding one class every year. (presently there are classes from Nursery to Std – VI.). In the year 2000 we purchased a plot of 1½ acres of land for school and construction of school building started from Baisakhi day of year 2001 by seeking Guru's blessing after an ARDAS.

I persuaded Gurdwara committee to spare funds and Gurdwara spent Rs. 15 lacs for school building and also got donations from Sikh and Non-Sikhs. We have so far spent Rs. 40 lacs and construction work of ground floor of school building was completed and school shifted to its new building from the school session 2002-03. Efforts are being made to collect fresh funds for the construction of first floor.

I have no hesitation to add that Guru Nanak Public School has established a good name amongst local schools having well-qualified and trained teachers.

The school is being run on a No profit No loss basis, with reasonable fees, and also helping the needy but meritorious students. The students of Guru Nanak Public School have won many awards from different competitions.

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**“Sikhs of the Khalsa:
A History of the Khalsa Rahit” -
McLeod’s latest book
Review by Jagpal Singh Tiwana**

Sir, - Thank you for publishing the above mentioned review by Mr. J.S. Tiwana. I agree with Mr Tiwana when he states that Dr. McLeod has published two dozen books on Sikhism, most of them published by Oxford University Press. Dr. McLeod is a Euro-Centric scholar who has influenced many “role-dancing” students to his type of research, which is against the very essence of “Khalsa Centric research.” The scholars he has produced have been busy denigrating our living Guru, indeed our ethos. In spite of a reprimand from the Akal Takht, his student, Dr. Pashuara Singh, has produced a collection of articles, in a book form, wherein he adds insult to injury. His other student, Dr. H.S. Oberoi, using McLeodian paradigm, has supervised two students, namely, Dr. Doris Jakosh and Dr. Jeevan Singh Deol. Whereas Dr. Jackosh writings are extremely odious, Dr.Deol contends that Guru Gobind Singh came under Puranic influence, as reflected in his writings.

Another of his scholars, Dr. Fenech claims that Sikh martyrs used such defense mechanisms as taunts to claim victory where the defeat was the reality! No wonder that the University of Toronto has brought an end to McLeodian research by closing the Sikh Study Department. These scholars were indeed violating all norms of ethnic research, as established by the Canadian Council, as well as generating hurting research, without the permission of the community under research. It is also a fact that Dr. Oberoi has been removed from the UBC Sikh Chair because of his Marxist and hurtful research.

I am not aware of any Sikh Gurdwara in the world invited Dr McLeod (or his brand of scholars) to make a presentation. Mr. Tiwana should know that one way of showing displeasure, is to acquire distance from the person who is hurting you or your community. I would urge him to read my article entitled, “Euro-Centric/Khalsacentric research” which has appeared in many reputable Sikh journals. If McLeod is the best known Sikh scholar of the 20th century, will Mr. Tiwana call Trumpp and Daya Nand the top scholars of Sikhism of the 19th century?

It is high time we examined the real motivations of such egotist scholars. I would like to end with a quote from a famous American philosopher, “if somebody comes to my house with the intention of doing me good, I should run away!” I am told that Dr. McLeod is not feeling well. Nevertheless, I wish him a speedy recovery.

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The ever-so gentle Guru Granth Sahib has some of the choicest rebukes for such so-called scholars, but forgives them their foolishness, quite apart from the admonishment by the Canadian Ethical Council norms. - Ed. SR

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Wearing of Religious symbols in French Schools

FOREIGN SECRETARY
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Dear Shri Singh,

Government of India has been carefully following the discussions in France over the issue of secularism and the efforts by the French authorities at the highest level to enact a law which would ban students from wearing religious symbols to schools. In addition, the French Government is enacting legislation whereby for the purposes of driving licenses or a national identity cards the wearing of turban is not permitted.

The French Government has been sensitised that this is an emotive issue and needs to be sensitively handled. Our Ambassador in France, Ms. Savitri Kunadi, is in contact with the leaders of the Sikh community in France and with the French Government on this matter. The French Ambassador here has been similarly sensitised.

Yours sincerely,
(Shashank)

Shri Tarlochan Singh
Chairman, National Commission for Minorities

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McLeod's Theory Questioned

Dear Sir, - This is with reference to the book review of Prof W.H. McLeod's *Sikhs of the Khalsa: A history of the Khalsa Rahit* by Jagpal S Tiwana published in the January 2004 issue of **The Sikh Review** [pp. 93-96]

In the review, Mr Tiwana observes:

"On Five K's, McLeod carefully examines each document to establish that no *Rahitnama* or book before the Singh Sabha period list [sic] them as Five Ks. He tends to agree with J. S. Grewal that Five Ks were there as part of the Khalsa initiation in 1699, though not called Five Ks, as we understand them now. They started appearing as Five Ks in the last quarter of the 19th century in the works of the Singh Sabha leaders." [pp. 95-96]

Unfortunately, this statement glosses over some very controversial conclusions reached by McLeod in his book. Nowhere does McLeod state that "[the] Five Ks were there as part of the Khalsa initiation in 1699, though not called Five Ks". Infact, one of the main arguments pursued by McLeod in this book is that Guru Gobind Singh did not enjoin the wearing of all the Five Ks during his lifetime. This becomes clear from the following quotations from *Sikhs of the Khalsa*.

“Guru Gobind Singh **did not** include them [the Five Ks] in his instructions at the founding of the Khalsa; they do not appear during the following century and three quarters; and they make their appearance only when Singh Sabha reformers were convinced that the Guru must have introduced them.” [p. 204]

“But did he [Guru Gobind Singh] command **all five** to be observed and were they called the Five Ks? The answers to these two questions are **assuredly** in the negative. It is only with the coming of the Singh Sabha movement, towards the end of the nineteenth century that both the questions come to be answered in the affirmative. The notion of the Five Ks comes to the fore at that time, having never been known before then. These Five Ks are declared to have been a vital part of the Rahit since the very beginning of the Khalsa and as such to have been a part of the Guru’s first instructions to the members of his new order. This, however, is a mistaken view. ” [p. 212]

McLeod accepts that Guru Gobind Singh instructed his Sikhs to wear five weapons, but these were not the Five Ks. He does not tell us as to why these five weapons were changed to the Five Ks by the Singh Sabha. However, in an endnote he mentions

“[Dr] Pashaura Singh suggests that it was as a result of the British ban on carrying weapons that the Singh Sabha replaced the ‘five weapons’ with ‘five religious symbols’, that is with the Five Ks.” [p. 249]

Responding to Dr J.S. Grewal’s observation that although the early documentary sources do not name the Five Ks, all the five items were nevertheless a part of the Khalsa apparel from the very beginning; McLeod states “that all five items **may** have been worn by Khalsa Sikhs since the very earliest days of the order”. [p. 212] But this was not due to any injunction by Guru Gobind Singh.

I hope you will bring the above points to the notice of your readers.

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