

Study of SGGS

Sir, - This is in reference to the book review by Prof. H.S. Virk of Dr. D.S. Chahal's book "*Sabd Guru to Granth Guru - An indepth Study* (SR - Jan 05). The author laments that most of the Sikhs stop short at reciting the hymns in SGGS, without making any effort to comprehend their meaning. They treat it like an idol and perform various rituals.

The author's sentiment is shared by me as well as many Sikhs that I have interacted with. But the problem that we found was that most of us simply cannot, on our own, understand the meaning and significance of the hymns. At the Gurudwaras - during the *Kirtan*, the hymn is just sung, without its meaning being told to the *sangat*. I recently talked with the Jathedar of the Dadar Gurdwara in Mumbai as to why he and his fellow associates do not explain the hymns. He was very candid to explain that Granthis like him are so poorly paid by the Gurudwaras/SGPC that most of their time is spent on trying to make their both ends meet and barely anytime is left for them to study and carefully decide what to speak and explain on a particular day. I myself saw his room that he has been given in the Gurdwara Sahib campus, which was very small and in that itself a bed, chair and a makeshift kitchen was accommodated. In a city like Mumbai, he was sent from Punjab, away from his family, at a meagre salary of Rs. 3000/- per month. Even drivers are paid better in Mumbai - Rs. 4500/- to 5,000/- p.m.! Agreed that his stay is taken care of (however shabby) and that his meals would also be through *langar* but he still has expenses and needs to send money back home.

In such circumstances, it is unthinkable to expect them to devote themselves in deep studies to explain to us, every day, the deeper meanings of SGGS. Unless we rectify these things, our quest for understanding the hymns will never be satisfied.

Further, there is a need for establishing institute for understanding Sikhism in all major towns and cities where there is a sizeable Sikh population. Anybody wishing to undertake short term, long term, weekly, monthly, or even yearly courses can join whenever they have time and inclination. I have searched in vain, in Mumbai, to find a Gianiji who would find time to explain to me and my children the knowledge of SGGS.

Mr. D.S Chahal has set up such an institute in Canada. We only wish, somebody would take a lead here, to do the same. Is it possible for *The Sikh Review* to take any lead in this direction?*

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* *A Sunday school is run by Calcutta Sikh Forum at the Youth Hall located in a central locality.* - Ed. SR

Gurbani Kirtan TV Relay from Harmandir Sahib

Sir, - It is a priceless gift for thousands of pious Sikh families in India and across the globe that the ETC channel transmits LIVE telecast of *Gurbani Kirtan* from Sri Darbar Singh twice everyday.

Guru Granth Sahib is a scripture of great beauty and universal appeal, with over 10,000 hymns in some 31 ragas. However, whether by design or coincidence, the *Ragi Jathas* not only repeat their "favou vite" *shabds*, but also the overall *repertoire* remains limited to a hundred or so *shabads*. This needs to be examined by Dharam Prachar Committee, since the infinite variety of *Updesh* must be reflected in *kirtan* sessions held at holy shrine.

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Downgrading Saropao

Sir, - The time honoured Parampara of conferring Saropas (robe of honour) normally awarded by the Singh Sahibs of Takhts for disinguished and noteworthy *sewa* of the Panth is being recklessly downgraded for political considerations. Every time a politician is so "honoured", the Gurdwara management must do heart searching. Saropa is the highest rare honour and old dignity and honour needs to be maintained.

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The Spirit of Youth

Sir, - This refers to "*What Sikh women want*" by Bibi Manpreet Kaur [SR December 2004; p 65]. This is an excellent effort to portray the role of Sikh women in Sikh History. We must encourage our younger generation and help them to make in-depth study of the Sikh history and, tradition.

With this spirit and goodwill in mind, here is some factual new information {or correction} which may be helpful to all readers. First, what we mean by reciting or meditating on NAAM of Akaalpurkh? Is it just repeating passively, or simply understanding the *sabd* of Gurbaani? Our scripture is store of unlimited knowledge and besides, singing praises of *Akaalpurkh*, demands positive action in the right direction. For instance, if we are telling lies all the time after doing our *Nitnem*, our love of Akaalpurkh is fake and fruitless.

Most of us are not aware of the fact that Family surnames, besides insignia of a tribe, were meant to be a symbol of identity of an individual for record keeping by Governments of the time, since 7th century CE. This may have been essential when detection of crime became necessary due to law and order problems. During the

reign of King Henry in England, mention of a family name (or last name) became part of the state law.

Sikhs should follow the tenets of *gurbaani* faithfully by practising use of individual merit in awarding recognition rather than “ancestor worship” in their daily life. Guru Nanak illustrated it through practice rather than following any *karm kand*.

In Sikhism the title ‘Singh’ has been used in the Name of a male. It is a word of Pali language, used by Buddhism, which is still practised in the names of males in Sri Lanka such as DevindeSube Singhe. [For details see *Prasaraprasana* by Kapur Singh, published by GNDU, Amritsar.]

Sada Kaur was wife of S.Gurbux Singh son of S.Jai Singh chief of Kanhya misl. She was not the mother but mother-in-law of Ranjit Singh.

Dowry is widely practised amongst those Sikhs who still follow the Hindu custom despite claiming to be Sikhs. There is no place in Sikhism for those who are greedy and run after money by foul means. Those who run after greedy people for matrimonial alliances are, too, fake Sikhs. Who is responsible for problems faced by Sikhs today? These very greedy Sikhs in the garb of leaders in religion and politics. Only Sikhs of Guru have to unite and educate young Sikhs to be beware of these Sikhs who all the time act like *Manmukhs* and lead us in to the deep waters while remaining in more than one boat in their life. People can learn from history if they so desire.

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France in Turban Turmoil

Sir - This is in reference to Dr. Rahi’s extremely erudite and well reaserched article-“Turban and the French law-A question of Freedom of Consience”: ***The Sikh Review*** January issue.

He has clearly brought out how, despite the various legal debates coursing through U.K.,Canada and America, the French Government has gone ahead and passed such a law. Apparently, it appears to be a case of Human Rights violation. When so many countries have realised and accepted the “Fundamental and inalienable right of Sikhs to wear their turban in all situations of life”, it is unethical (if not hypocritical) of the French Government to ignore all such reasoned discussions and try to slam a policy which is different to what is followed by all other countries and which tramples upon the right of a community.

Since Dr. Rahi is an eminent advocate of the Supreme Court of India, my query is - can we not go to the International Court of Justice and/ or appeal to the U.N. Human Rights Commission.Who can do so? and how? And, is’nt it possible for him (and his law colleagues), as an eminent and qualified member of the community to file such a case, of course with the help and assistance of all Sikhs and *especially the readers of ‘The Sikh Review’*.

Once again, congratulations for your highly informative article which deals with the issue in all perspectives and the beautiful summation of the article by that Voltarian-spirit quotation.

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Sir, - I consider "***The Sikh Review***" as one of the best journals to enlighten people, Sikhs and others, about the Sikh religion and its values. It gives news and views about a multitude of matters which concern the Sikhs everywhere.

By publishing an English language journal, I think you are rendering a great service, specially to the NRI Sikhs all over the world, many of whom are not good at reading the Gurmukhi script.

I wish your journal a great success which it deserves.

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Story of Chalis Muktas

Sir, In ***The Sikh Review*** (January 2005 Issue), S. Pritpal Singh Bindra has [based on the earlier writings by the Historians,] repeated that: "They were fatally wounded when they were found by the Guru in the battlefield. They begged the Guru's pardon and the Guru, who still had the disclaimer in his pocket, readily tore it up, and blessed them with an eternal salvation". (pages 25-26)

At page 28, S. Joginder Singh says: "Guru Gobind Singhji received letters from Aurangzeb and Hill Chiefs, duly sworn on the outerpage of Quran, and holy cow, for safe passage if he left Anandpur".

Since Sri Guru Sahib kept safe the *Be-Dawa* Disclaimer, what happened to those Letters of pledges which were equally important and significant? If those were misplaced or destroyed during battles, how disclaimer remained safe?

If you come across any evidence, kindly do share with readers.

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