

Sex & The Sikh Ethics

We appreciate the tremendous effort by Bibi Bhoopinder Kaur in her article "Youth's sexual behaviour & the Sikh Ethics", [The Sikh Review, March 2006]

The sexual behaviour is a natural instinct to be contained within the parameters of the social groups in various part of the world. The western civilisation has nothing to do with our sexual behaviour, which too, differ from urban to rural, group to group. We must look within ourselves and rectify our weaknesses, in accordance with our social conceptions. To be honest, western influences have enriched our materially backward societies, through education, advanced knowledge in various areas. Our grey social areas have been exploited by the well placed ring leaders, for their personal benefits and these do not exclude our so called, present religious leaders and practicing priests. The reality is, that self interest motivates them to interpret religion for their own gain. Even today, the practice of destruction of female foetus is common, resulting in severe shortage of females to males and yet the old habits of demanding dowry from girls' parents, by the boys' parents, carry on. The trend ought to be reversed, as we see girls 'purchased' from say Eastern India, by the boys, are expected to perform polyandry functions, a common female for all male brothers. It will be no wonder, if the girls demand dowry from boys, before long, to polyandry sale. Islam has faced the same problem in its area of origin, where the girls were sold as chattel and were paid the full price. The conception of 'Deen Mehaer' goes on, in that community, irrespective of gender ratio. Once practiced, it sticks for generations to come.

Media highlight such cases, which enlighten us, of the wrong doing within our society. Let it keep it up. It can be beneficial. Even our Granthis are proven guilty, like the school teachers in our patriarchal society. Do not hide them, but expose them. It will prove beneficial. Put the "fear of God", though man-made laws, into them.

One may not agree, but Bibi Bhupinder Kaur makes a noble effort to advocate certain remedies, for the benefit of the society. Some are practical, like recital of prayers, twice a day, to alter the trend of mind, from sex and restrict to safe period sex, as prescribed by nature. It may work in many cases, but not all. In our materialistic world, which is advancing at a rapid speed, daily or even frequent visits to places of worship, may not be possible. What is a Sikh diet, except for the common habits and practices of the society, in which we live. And the society is not made of Sikhs alone. We may give the lead, but no more. Even that is a great achievement and worth trying.

During my years in Europe, especially Greece, we used to see men and women dipping in sea water naked. No one thought anything wrong with it. It is no longer the physique and muscle power that rules today. It is the brain power, that has replaced it in many parts of the world. Let us go along with the changing times, else we shall be left behind.

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Need for good Leadership

I have been reading *The Sikh Review* regularly for the last about 4 years and it has changed my life style. Every issue is better than previous one. The July issue is in my hand (reached today) and every word, every sentence and every page is piece of excellent material. The latest issue recalls how we have had great personalities like Gyani Kartar

Singh, Justice Ranjit Singh Narula. Our past was glorious. But now we have unprincipled politicians who are not ashamed of knowing off each other's *pagree* in public. For the sake of kursi our leaders are divided and gone astray. TV of Parliament session (Lok Sabha) shows little contribution by Sikh MPs. Let us not become a mockery in the eyes of the world. Some Gurdwaras have become benevolence seeking deras and innocent people are exploited in the name of our great Gurus. Let us pray that Wahe Guru Ji gives us great leaders and save Sikhism from opportunists.

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The Hymn on *Mundavni*

This is in reference to letters of S. Suaran Singh and Brig. Hardit Singh (SR April 2006). The valuable response and critical questions of both these Gurmukhs are appreciated and recognised as a part of process of dialogue and discussion which is necessary for the understanding of essence of gurbaani in order to practice it in daily life by Gursikhs. The context of these two letters is discussed in this letter.

S. Suarn Singh refers to Mudavni of Guru Amar Das and Mundavni of Guru Arjan which are reproduced below:

QwIY ivic qY vsqU peIE hir Bojnu AMimqu swru]*
 ijqu KwDY mnu iqRpqIAY pwelAY moK duAwru]
 iehu Bojnu AIBu hY sMqhu LBY gur vlcwir]
 ieh mudwvxl ikau ivchu kFIAY sdw rKIAY auir Dwir]
 eyh mudwvxl siqgurU pwel gurisKw IDI Bwil]
 nwnk ijsu buJwey su buJsl hir pwieAw gurmuiK Gwil]1] 1
 sorT m:3 s:g:g:s: pMnw 645
 muMdwvxl m: 5

Qwl ivic iqMin vsqU peIE squ sMqoKu vlcwro]*
 AMiMMmRq nwmu Twkur kw pieE ijs kw sbsu ADwro]
 jy ko KwvY jy kO BuMcY iqs kw hoie auDwro]
 eyh vsqu qjl nh jwel inq inq rKu auir Dwro]
 qm sMswru crn lig qrlAY sBu nwnk bRhm pswro]1] 2
 (slok m: 5 s:g:g:s: pMnw 1429)

The point raised by S. Suaran Singh is correct that both these slokas are using words Mudavni and Mundavni in two different meanings and contexts. Despite the fact that both appear to be similar in conveying the message and almost similar in language. One feature is common in both these slokas that first stanza* in each is independent as far as the meanings of whole sloka is concerned. It is a sort of introduction to the latter part of slokas and stands out complete in its sense and purpose. The word vlcwr is conspicuously important in slokas 1 and 2. It is humbly submitted that the assertion of S. Hardit Singh that word vlcwr is not important in these slokas or for that matter in gurbaani of SGGS, is untenable. The presence of word vlcwir jW blcwrw in the slokas 3 and 4 respectively provides substantial and irrefutable evidence about its importance in the gurbaani of SGGS.

iekw bwxl ieku guru ieko sbdu vlcwir]2]10] 3
 sorT m: 3 s:g:g:s: pMnw 646
 hir kw iblovnw mn kw blcwrw]
 gur pRswid pwwY AMimRqu Dwrrw]3]1]10]4

(Aws w kblr s:g:g:s: pMnw 478)

However, in the Mundavni of Guru Arjun, the first stanza containing, squ, sMqoKu, Aqy vlcwro is pregnant with meanings or qualifications which are essential for meditating over the *Amrit Naam*. In other words without fulfilling this prerequisite further action will appear to be an exercise in futility or a meaningless endeavor by a Gurmukh. Thus these two stanzas are independent and at the same time related to satisfying a precondition to reach the door of *Amrit Naam*. It is hoped that this humble submission will be given due consideration by the readers of this letter.

The interpretation of every scripture depends upon the understanding of poetical form of language and structure of stanzas in the couplet. The grammatical rules for the understanding of prose are simple and are easily understood by most of us. But such rules are not always observed in the poetical form

In ancient literature, convenience of memorizing and ease for recitation favored poetical method for oral tradition which continued for a long time. According to some sources for the first time the Vedas were recorded on paper in 4th century C E. Ancient tradition of poetry lacked punctuation which led to different meanings of a scripture depending upon one's personal grasp or experience of learning it from other sources. Today, often Alvin Toffler is quoted for a fresh approach to modern learning which is fast superseding old methods which have been followed for almost in the entire past century, if not for many centuries.

The illiterates of 21st century are not those who cannot read or write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn and relearn.

The most famous scientist of twentieth century, Einstein has been often quoted for the advice he gave to young students at Princeton University; *Be careful to learn correctly since unlearning is very difficult.*

Guru Arjun has used Mundavni in SGGS in the sense which, commonly in English, is called "The End". Recently there was a book by Giani Gurdit Singh called "Mundavni" which took him to the gates of Akal Takht to resolve the controversy amongst the Jathedars of various Takhts. This book emphatically states that Raag Maala is an insertion in Sri Guru Granth Sahib after its compilation by Guru Arjan and recension by Guru Gobind Singh. How many Sikhs have studied this book and commented on its contents? Even if some has studied it, have they accepted the evidence given by Giani Gurdit Singh? Did they change their views which they held before its publication? All this refers to the process of learning, unlearning and relearning which, unfortunately, is very slow amongst Sikhs all over the world. This, in fact, displays a measure of courage of commitment and depth of understanding of problems, being faced by younger generation of Sikhs who are growing up in an atmosphere of uncertainty and indifference in the diaspora.

My humble submission is that we should be prepared to listen and learn and use logic rather than emotions to understand and disseminate knowledge of gurbaani amongst younger generation of Sikhs. They are losing confidence in the credibility of elders, since elders are ignoring their demand for religious education in English in the Gurdwara or any other language which is their mother tongue in the diaspora. This conclusion is based on information gathered by this *Nishkaamsevak* after travelling in various countries of the world where Sikhs are living today.

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Special Stamps

This year there are some important centenaries especially 400 years of Martyrdom of Guru Arjun Devji and of Sri Akal Takht Sahib, Amritsar.

It is regrettable that these two historic events are being ignored by India Post. Neither a stamp nor any special cover has been issued to commemorate such events of great importance. It is a pity that while lots of stamps are being issued every year, extremely important historical events are being ignored. It seems India Post has a blinkered view of history and philately. Is this promotion of philately when stamps and covers are being issued to placate a particular region of India.'

This biased attitude of India Post is not in the interests of promotion of philately. India Post has already made a mess of "Guru Granth Sahib" stamps.

I request again, please issue stamps on Guru Arjun Dev Martyrdom and on 400 years of Sri Akal Takht Sahib. Other neighbouring countries have done it.

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Random Thoughts on Role Models

There is a typo in the editorial of the July "Sikh Review" (which credits a "Gurmukh Singh (UK)" with the authorship of "Rise of Sikhs Abroad". In fact, the author is another Gurmukh Singh from India. I have read a review of this publication and also seen some other similar attempts like "Amongst the Sikhs rising for the stars" by Dr Surjit Kaur. (My advice to Dr Surjit Kaur was to agree on objective criteria for selection of individuals as role models.) Writing about Sikhs or Indians abroad is also a lucrative business! for some who invite payments for entries! Many such publications are shoddy, to say the least.

A publication based on first hand knowledge about the true Sikh community builders abroad is still missing. My idea of community builders are Gursikh *sevadars* at grassroots level. For example, those of Southall (UK) mentioned in Bhai Rama Singh's teaching autobiography (which I translated to English with the title "In Search of the True Guru" at the request of some AKJ Gursikhs). I can also recall many such community builders in Malaysia (Malaya) from my school days in places like Raub, Taiping, Penang, Kula Lumpur and many other towns. A later - and less healthy - development has been the collectors of "Dato-ships" (Malaysia) and "OBEs" (UK) at the expense of community interests.

Outstanding exceptions in this category have been Sikhs, like Dr. Indarjit Singh, OBE (UK) who recognised the great importance of media decades ago and dedicated his life to this cause. Barrister Harjit Singh (deceased) devoted much time to human rights. Others, like Habinder Singh Rana, have chosen high profile Anglo-Sikh projects which promote Sikh identity. In the new generation, there are those in UK like Kashmir Singh (British Sikh Federation), Dabidarjit Singh OBE, Harmander Singh (Sikhs In England) and Bibis Gurdev Kaur and Balbinder Kaur Saund - all dedicated to community service in their own way and style.

Others, like S. Fauja Singh and Bhai Dya Singh of Australia fall into yet another category of their own. There are leading religious establishments, like Bhai Sahib Mohinder Singh of Guru Nanak Nishkam Sewak Jatha of Birmingham.

In the lower category (from the community service aspect) are those "reaching for the stars". In their case, professional or political career advancement, wealth accumulation, and collection of awards and honours are the direct personal objectives. Community

benefits are the by-products. However, by their very achievements they raise the community profile. To show the Sikh flag (identity) where not seen before is a matter of personal satisfaction and community pride : Judge Mota Singh became the first Sikh judge and at about the same time I was representing a UK department at 1st Secretary (Trade) level at Geneva. Nevertheless, the true community builders and role models are not always those who are reaching for the stars!

Gurmukh Singh (UK)

