

## WORLD SIKH NEWS

Americans... still believe in an America where anything's possible - they just don't think their leaders do.

—Barack Obama

## Our Audacity of Hope

The World Sikh News is a community newspaper and we would be more than happy to confine ourselves to comment on community issues. Fortunately, we are blessed to be part of such a religion that does not see the community as isolated from the rest of the world. No Sikh offers an Ardaas for a cause any less than Sarbat Da Bhala. So the affairs of the world come very much under the umbrella of our community's concerns, and looking at the way India and US political and strategic relations are moving, we as a peace loving community concerned about the welfare of the millions who live on the margins of the society can have no choice but to make an intervention.

During her recent engagements with India, US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton has shown immense interest in increasing business for US companies and cementing a new defence relationship during her India visit, but what is being overlooked is a basic reordering of US priorities in south Asia. It is long overdue.

The United States must stop feeding the fires between India and Pakistan and help put an end to the south Asian arms race. Unfortunately, we perceive many contradictions and confusions in United States policy in south Asia. US interests are now becoming limited to making money and recruiting India as a strategic ally, which, in turn, involve selling weapons and turning a blind eye to the country's nuclear weapons.

This is in direct contradiction with the stated position of India, but bothers us little because India never meant to keep its word. Indira Gandhi's Pokhran and Vajpayee's nuclear tests proved that.

It is sad that Secretary of State Clinton did not lay the kind of stress on the nuclear issue as she laid on the "300 million members of India's burgeoning middle class". She spoke so forcefully about the "vast new market and opportunity" but not about the way India has been growing as a nuclear power.

Indian civil society does not have a very loud voice, and Clinton could have helped it become stronger. No doubt the richie rich Indian middle class is large. The current total US population is also about 300 million. And, this new class is greedy for a more American lifestyle.

But is it looking forward to learn better notions of democracy from the civil society debate in the US? Oh no. India is happy with the focus on its market for US goods and services, and providing cheap labour for US firms.

Sorry to disturb the happy mirage but the fact remains that India is a land of huge inequities and little has happened for the west to change its image of India as a home of the desperately poor. India's poor people number at over 450 million, most of them living on less than \$1.25 a day.

India and the US are now surely partners in peace, but are they partners for peace? If the US goal is to help India become a major world power in the 21st century, then must not we be concerned with what kind of power it plans to become?

Teeming masses of Indians live so far pushed on the margins that their voice is not being heard by the world community. India has developed an immense capacity to not listen to what its minorities are going through. The way it dealt with the Sikh aspirational movement, the Operation Bluestar, the anti-Sikh genocide are all pointers to the nature of the Indian brahmanical establishment. Its attitude towards its dalits, tribals, Christians, Muslims makes it more than clear that on its own, India will not be a fair power. It is time the US harks back to the ideals of the founding fathers so that it gets inspired enough to help change India, and if need be, force India to change. As India marks its Independence Day, is it our audacity for having such a hope from the author of The Audacity of Hope?

# The Shoe Writes Back

Dear Jagmohan Singh

Waheguru Ji Ka Khalsa, Waheguru Ji Ki Fateh!

Having lived with Jarnail Singh, I have learnt to say Fateh and I am sure you would be surprised but happy to hear that.

I am indeed grateful to you for the respect shown to me when you wrote a letter to me. Rarely has someone done that to me or to any of my brethren. Jarnail Singh immortalized me by his act of honour and by writing a letter to me; you have given me a respectable status in Sikh society.

Since you wrote that dear letter to me, I have been ensconced in the headquarters of the Indian National Congress at 28 Akbar Road, New Delhi. I will share with you my experience and what lies ahead.

They have thrown me in a corner here and I am not sure what my fate is going to be. Heritage preservation does not come easily to Indians, particularly that of opponents. I am not sure whether someone will accord me appropriate status. Whenever they glance at me, they see me with blood-shot eyes. There are many who abuse me and while doing so, do not spare the Sikhs. They are however careful to ensure that they do so when Dr. Manmohan Singh or anyone who is perceived to be close to him is not around.

Actually this oldest political party of the country has played its cards well. Firstly, it did not pursue any legal case against Jarnail Singh, then I was not given to the police, otherwise they would have to make an entry of my presence at the police station and thirdly, they quietly exerted pressure on Jarnail Singh's employers to remove him from service.

And what did the Sikh leadership do? When you were traveling in Canada (I learnt this from my internet sources) do you know the details of what the Sikhs did. Well, they did nothing. Sitting in a corner; of late, I had heard a lot about names like SGPC, DSGMC, Akali Dals of various hues and shades and other Panthic groups. No one, repeat, No one came forward to express support to Jarnail Singh and me. Had the Sikh leaders reacted strongly, I am sure things would have been different. It would have been very difficult for Dainik Jagran to dismiss him so easily. On many an occasion, I have recalled conversations which Jarnail Singh used to have with others and those which agitated him alone. One such quote which has been haunting me in view of the Sikh "response" was what author Cunningham wrote a century ago, "a nation of lions, led by ...." In deference towards Jarnail Singh, I refrain from using the last word.

I strongly suggest that the Sikh community will have to soon get out of this mould of ingratitude. This is totally unSikh-like. Sikhs have always been a gregarious and grateful people, and I cannot understand this ungratefulness to members of their own ilk. I am particularly shocked at the attitude of these big sounding acronyms. I think someone needs to write about their role or lack of it. They really need a thorough drubbing.

What did the journalistic fraternity in the enlightened city of Delhi do? Nothing again. The Editors Guild, the federations of journalists, the effervescent Press clubs, the Progressive Journalists Forum, self-styled freedom of press experts and the Press Council of India -no one took notice of the uncalled for action against seasoned journalist Jarnail Singh. Nobody took notice of the fact that Dainik Jagran had labeled Jarnail Singh's action 'subversive'.

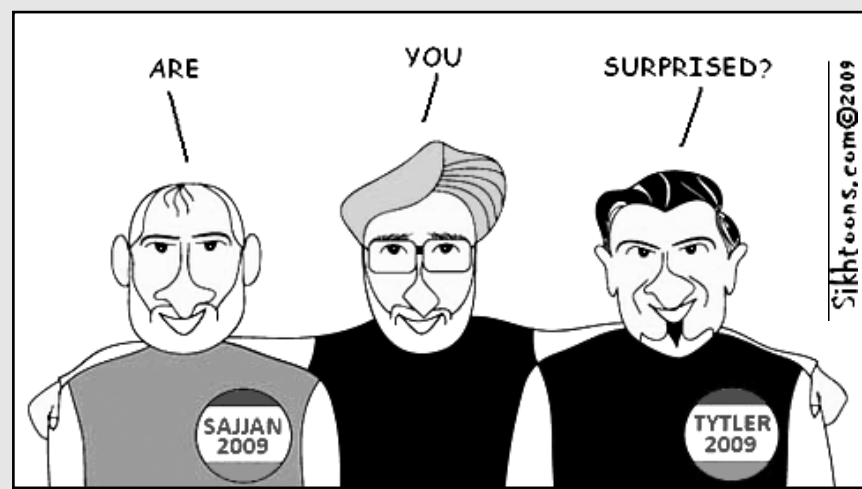
In this Congress office, I have heard Dalit and Muslim leaders (there are hardly any Sikh leaders who come here, those from Punjab come only during elections) wonder as to why the Sikhs in Punjab have not protested against the media house of Dainik Jagran. I agree with them. After all, how can the newspaper be allowed to proliferate in Punjab after dismissing Jarnail Singh? How can the paper be allowed to sponsor Gurdwara billboards? Where is the youth of Punjab?

Fortunately, there have been exceptions. There have been some small organizations and concerned individuals, who have expressed solidarity with me and Jarnail Singh and have volunteered to take the battle for justice to the next level. I understand that

Unable to withstand a cursory reply unworthy of the Indian home minister -P. Chidambaram, to his query relating to acquittal of perpetrators of the November 1984 carnage, Journalist Jarnail Singh softly hurled his shoe in protest in April this year. The shoe missed the target. Almost. The Congress party went into reverse gear and side-tracked Jagdish Tytler and Sajjan Kumar. A few days later, Jagmohan

Singh, the editor of World Sikh News, wrote an Open letter to the shoe, which had made a deep impact on contemporary history. On 1 July, Jarnail Singh was removed from service by his newspaper on grounds of "subversive and indisciplinary conduct".

Pondering over the letter for months and mulling over future prospects, Jarnail Singh's shoe writes back.



Jarnail Singh is mulling over the prospects and may take some time to decide.

This place where I have been thrown is a centre of intrigue. There are conspirators galore. The kind of stuff which you see in Indian movies of how one politician is at another's throat. I have listened to many a conversation regarding how to dethrone a leader and how to foist another on the throne. Otherwise it is a boring place, but the grapevine has enlivened my stay here.

Some of the mandarins here keep chalking and re-chalking the Sikh agenda and the Muslim schemata. When they become unmindful of my presence, it becomes easy for me to overhear them. They are really worried and jittery about what Sikhs will do in November 2009, while recalling 25 years of the anti-Sikh pogrom of November 1984 in Delhi and elsewhere. When they ignore or forget about my presence here, they open their hearts. Some want to literally follow Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's idea and indulge in media management leading to his call of forget and forgive; others want Rahul Gandhi to visit Trilokpuri and replant the tree which his illustrious father had shaken and uprooted. Believe me, they are scared.

One tree in Delhi had shaken it to its roots in November 1984; now they are so scared of Harinder Singh Phoolka and Sant Sewa Singh's 25,000 saplings all around the country. The November 1984 one was a 100 year old tree with a chequered history of deceit and murder. The saplings now being planted are sweet revenge, atleast that is how I see it. By the way, how about writing a letter to the tree that shook Delhi? Please do consider my idea.

The cronies of Sajjan Kumar, Tytler, Kamal Nath and others in the Congress party always go in a huddle when they talk about my master -Jarnail Singh's forthcom-

ing book on those tragic times of November 1984. It is a classic sight to see their heads roll from left to right, for they clearly envisage that their fates have been sealed. Forever. They are not only dazed, but worried to. They were under the impression that Sikhs in general have forgotten it and the Delhi Sikh leaders have been influenced into silence. Now they bite their nails, not knowing what is in store for them.

I was very sad the day Jarnail Singh lost his job. I could not do much. I was instrumental in the dismissal of Tytler and Sajjan, but I could not save my own Jarnail Singh. The God-fearing man that he is, I am sure he realizes that what has happened has happened for good. He could not have continued with Dainik Jagran, whose owners shared the dining table with Home Minister P. Chidambaram -just a week after dismissing Jarnail Singh from his work. It is ironic that instead of punishing the guilty, they have dismissed the one who had exposed the guilty and those who were attempting to shield the killers. I agree with Jarnail Singh that, "instead of taking action against the accused, they are dismissing me under pressure of the Congress government".

You know, one thing is pretty certain. Jarnail Singh will fight back. Even with one shoe on his feet and one morsel in his mouth, he will doggedly pursue the case of justice for November 1984 widows and orphans. As a devout Sikh, he will answer the call of duty for everyone in the true spirit of Sarbat da Bhala -welfare of all humankind. He will do it with more energy and zeal.

My only trouble here is that I am alone and lonely. I have learnt from my sources (I picked up this habit from Jarnail Singh and his colleagues) that my better half is fine and has been preserved well by Gurmeet Kaur - suave, gentle and soft-spoken better half of Jarnail Singh. I am certain that in case I am thrown away and not returned to my rightful owner -Jarnail Singh, then my better half should be bestowed the status and respect shown to me; after all, both of us have been serving Jarnail Singh and the cause of fair play.

Should I get lost, you should not forget my better half, my left half. I am sure, like Amu, she will continue the journey for justice.

Thank you once again.

**Jarnail Singh's Right leg Shoe**  
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