



WE SHALL BE THE VOICE

One of the most prescient scholars of Sikhism in contemporary times, Sardar Ajmer Singh, is fond of quoting a Nigerian proverb often. "Until lions have their historians, tales of the hunt shall always glorify the hunters".

25 years after the catastrophic events of 1984, the larger meta-narrative of history is still being written by the hunters.

Worse, many of the representatives of the hunted have been collaborating with the enemy for a pride of place, supping on the crumbs side table.

Ajmer Singh's latest book's title says more than what many of our community leaders tie themselves up in knots in order to avoid saying: 1984. *Unchitviya Kehar. Unbelievable, Unforgettable, Unforgivable.*

After a quarter century since we, our women, our children, our homes, were assaulted, mauled and burnt on the roads of Delhi and elsewhere, the Sikh Nation has seen the machinations of the Indian Nation State that has presided over clean chits to those guilty of genocide even as the witnesses die one by one, many unable to even depose in India's courts of law.

Notwithstanding the popular notion, it is not just Congress that is guilty. Indian establishment's attitude towards the Sikh Nation is well thought out and involves not passive nod but an active acquiescence of brahmanical forces that rule the country. Only the naive make a distinction among the Congress, the BJP and the many other shades of political establishment.

The Sikh Nation has done well by taking its case to the community of nations. The Justice March on the Capitol Hill on November 1 will help reiterate the Sikhs' stance that India betrayed the very people that fought for its Independence, were its saviours in wars and helped put food on its plate.

But we need to go further.

We need to understand and engage with the historical

movement in which we, our demands, our aspirations, our doubts and apprehensions as also our religious and political aims were either outrightly denigrated or distorted. It was this skewed picture that was used to justify the Genocide.

As rage seethes in our minds and our blood boils when we read the accounts from the streets of Sultanpuri, or find that Indian Government has no compunction in naming rehabs for widows as 'Widows Colony', we must not lose sight of the fact that we need to understand the present in the light of the past, and the past in the light of the present.

There is no better and more poignant way to remember the ones who are no more and learn from history's harsh lessons than by giving the dead a voice.

The commemoration by the Sikh Nation of the 25 years of Genocide is a way of giving voice to the dead.

Eminent Sikhism scholar Dr. Cynthia Keppley Mahmood is fond of telling the tale of a beautiful book and movie *'The Diving Bell and the Butterfly'*, a biopic of a man paralyzed in an accident who can only move his one eyelid. He desires nothing but death but then with the help of a nurse, develops a sort of code with the eyelid's movement and succeeds after years in dictating an entire book, his own life story. It underlines how a voice, even if it rings only through the batting of an eyelid, is liberating and indicative of dignity.

At this juncture in history, our voice has either been stifled or bought by those who have spare crumbs on the table. Our tribute to those who ran to escape from the marauding hordes, but hobbled, stumbled and finally fell, their turbans coming off and their dupattas pulled away as they were burnt alive on the streets of Delhi, will be to become their voice. The Trilokpuris, the Sultanpuris, the Widows Colonies need that voice.

The *World Sikh News* vows to be that voice.

