

Seminar on Intellectual Terrorism as a Source of Communal Tension

Mata Iqbal Kaur Memorial Educational Society, Sarawan Bodla, District Muktsar, Punjab, a prominent institution devoted to educational, literary, and cultural activities, organized recently a seminar on the controversial syllabus books published by NCERT (National Council for Educational Research and Training).

The programme opened with Professor Mohan Singh's famous poem "Sikhi Da Boota" sung by popular folk singer Tarlok Brar. Introducing the subject of the seminar, the compere Sh. Hardip Dhillon said that the efforts to distort history through syllabus books are nothing else but "intellectual terrorism" because some vested interests and mischievous forces are trying to depict the religious personalities and Gurus of various sects in negative terms. This gives birth to tendencies of communalism and results in social and political restlessness.

Dr. Surjit Kaur Jolly, a Visiting Professor at Gobind Sadan Institute of Advanced Studies in Comparative Religions, Delhi, welcomed the eminent scholars, writers, journalists, and representatives of various educational, religious and social organizations present at the occasion.

Dr. Iqbal Singh Dhillon, an eminent scholar from Chandigarh, delivered the key address. He said that the process of distortions of Sikh literature started at the time when the first copy of the Adi Granth was prepared and it was sent to Lahore for binding. Bhai Bhanho, a Sikh disciple, prepared another copy on the way, adding some hymns on his own. Dr. Dhillon further informed that Dr. Malkiat Singh Rahi started the struggle single-handed in 1995 against the misinformation about Sikh Gurus incorporated in the NCERT history book "Modern India" by filing a suit in Panjab and Haryana High Court because his son Amandeep, a student of +2 class, became disturbed

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when he was taught in the class that Guru Gobind Singh had joined the service of Mughal Emperor Bahadur Shah. Dr. Dhillon also informed how cases against these distortions of Sikh history included in this book and also "Medieval India" had been fought by Dr. Rahi and recently won.

Dr. Jagmohan Singh Rajput, Director of NCERT who had made it specially to attend the seminar, joined the discussion and revealed that he had at last been able to remove the selfish writers who had been staying put in NCERT for the last three decades, unwilling to make due amendments in the syllabus books. This, he told, had been possible with the blessings of Baba Virsa Singh Ji Maharaj of Gobind Sadan. These writers had leveled false allegations of "saffronization of education" against him. Even now when efforts are being made to make due amendments, threatening letters to stall the process are being received he further told. "Should we continue to call Guru Tegh Bahadur a plunderer and a robber?" he asked. Replying to queries raised by Principal Balbir Singh Sandhu and story-writer Joginder Singh Nirala, he told that history was not being rewritten so that it looked Indian, rather than the one written under directions received from England. Major Karnail Singh from Chandigarh and Dr. Maninder Singh wanted to enquire about the sources of misinformation about renunciation of the world by Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh's being a devotee of Chandi, a goddess. Dr. Rajput said that some history books such as those written by Dr. Harbans Singh, Hari Ram Gupta, and Taran Singh have such references, but that even then these remarks

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have been removed in the latest printing of the texts by the written request of Professor Kirpal Singh Bandugar, SGPC Chief.

Jathedar Pangat Singh Bhullar and Major Singh Hamad from Ferozepur wanted to know about the proceedings in the Parliament over this matter in which Dr. Rajput said that Sh. Jagmeet Brar was contacted by him to provide assistance but Mr. Brar rather chose to abstain from the Parliament on the day of the discussion.

Dr. Nazar Singh suggested that religions should be taught in such a way that this does not lead to communalism. Principal Jarnail Singh Sandhu desired that India is a country of regional cultures, thus regional linguistic boards must be set up and consulted to check whether any wrong information had been given anywhere about any religion or community. Dr. Bhupinder Singh Khehra, an eminent educationist from Patiala, condemned the mischievous elements masquerading as writers for the disgraceful remarks against Sikh Gurus, incorporated in history books under a well-planned conspiracy. He appreciated Dr. Rajput for his sincere, fearless and productive efforts to check such incidents in the future.

Mary Kaur Fisher, a well-known American writer, read out some portions of Encyclopaedia Britannica to show how the writer shown as "K.S." had distorted the significance of five Sikh "kakkars" through his mischievous and ill-designed write-up. On being asked about the author, she told that he is none else but the familiar English writer Khushwant Singh.

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Dr. Gurjant Singh Sekhon condemned the attitude of Khushwant Singh who even having been born in a Sikh family does not recognize Guru Granth Sahib as the eleventh Sikh Guru. Dr. Surjit Kaur Jolly pointed out that it was not only Sikh history but also history of Jaats and Jains that has been distorted in the history texts. Panjabi Jaat Leader from Meerut, Shivratn Masand, stressed the need for reading history so that various sects may , maintain their original identity.

The host, S. Gurdev Singh Sandhu, while thanking the audience and participants of the seminar, pleaded that such serious discussion should be organized at a still higher level to check the mischief-mongers from spreading communal hatred and social disharmony through their blasphemous writings. Among other scholars who joined the discussion were Dr. Darshan Singh Narula, Harvinder Singh, Narinder Kaur from Mohali, Col. Davinder Singh Sandhu, Shiv Kanwar Singh Sandhu, Rajbarinder Singh Sandhu, Mangal MSadan, Nirmal Deol, Gurcharan Chauhan, Paash Singh Sidhu, and Principal Nirmaljit Kaur. The programme concluded with Dr. Surjit Pattar's song presented in the melodious voice of Ms. Satwant Kaur from Government College, Muktsar.

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