

INDIA UN CUT

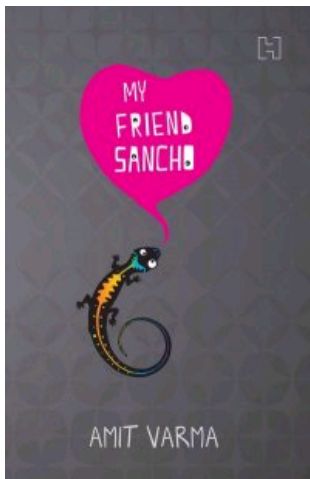
Published by Amit Varma

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MY FRIEND SANCHO



My first book, *My Friend Sancho*, was published in May 2009, and went on to become the biggest selling debut novel released that year in India. It is a contemporary love story set in Mumbai, and had earlier [been longlisted](#) for the Man Asian Literary Prize 2008. To learn more about the book, [click here](#).

If you're interested, do join the [Facebook group](#) for *My Friend Sancho*

[Click here](#) for more about my publisher, Hachette India.

My posts on India Uncut about *My Friend Sancho* can be found [here](#).



RECENT ENTRIES

Men, Listen Up

According to the Times of India, the five things men need to do to attract women are 1] grow...

Heavy Fuel

Mid Day reports: In an attempt to prevent animal abuse, the state government has instructed petroleum giants Indian Oil,...

The Dalit Cartel

Check out this piece by Shikha Dalmia on the role that market forces play in perpetuating the caste system. ...

The India Uncut Blog

10 June, 2008

Knives on Planes

On Sunday morning, while catching a flight from Chandigarh to Mumbai, I saw [the following sign](#) at the airport:

Categories of banned items

- * Knives of any length, composition or description
- * Most cutting instruments, including carpet knives and box cutters (and spare blades), any device with a folding or retractable blade, ice picks, straight razors, and metal scissors with pointed tips.
- * Note: Sikh passengers have been permitted to carry a kirpan (upto 6" blade and 3" handle) in domestic flights only.

So basically, all knives, box-knives, nailcutters and perhaps even nail polish are banned on flights—unless you're a Sikh, in which case your religious beliefs trump all other considerations. I find this caveat immensely disturbing.

It's based on [article 25 of our constitution](#), and I have no issues with the right to religion. But, [like all our other rights](#), this right extends only to the point that its exercise infringes no one else's rights. For example, if your religion requires you to stand on your head naked, you are free to do so—but you ask for too much if you demand entry into my house and wish to use my living room for that purpose.

Similarly, if a private airline wishes to ban knives on board, that is entirely its prerogative. Anybody's right to religion is irrelevant here, because exercising it would infringe the airline's right to its property. Airlines across the world do not allow knives on board, and I'm sure that would be the case in India as well: this caveat is [enforced by the government](#), pandering to a religious minority with a rule that endangers all of us.

Ideally, airlines should be able to set their own guidelines, and we should be able to choose our airline accordingly. All things being equal, I'd rather fly an airline that allowed no exceptions on this issue than one that did. Equally, some Sikhs may prefer to fly one that allows kirpans, and many customers may be indifferent to the issue. We should all—airlines and customers—be allowed choice in the matter. But our government would rather impose its preferences on us, for what are we but mere subjects?

Also, I took [a picture of the sign](#) at Chandigarh airport, and urge you to read it. You will note that "baseball/softball bats" are banned, but there is no mention of cricket bats. Ski poles are also banned. That indicates to me that the sign was copy-pasted from a similar sign in the US, with our babus not even being able to frame these rules in an Indian context. Only the caveat about kirpans was added by them, with its odd size restrictions. (I wonder how they arrived at a limit of six inches. "Not enough to decapitate someone, so it should be safe,"

About Amit Varma

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Ban Nudity! Ban Nightlife!

Our right-wing lunatics are so funny sometimes that it's hard to hate them. Balbir Punj has a bizarre (but...

City News

Having resumed blogging, it was natural for me to head over to the ToI site for the potential double...

I can imagine a babu saying.)

There is great scope for a Savita Bhabhi storyline here, though:

Savita Bhabhi is in an aircraft, savouring the private thrill of wearing no underwear under her diaphanous saree and two-sizes-too-small blouse. Suddenly, the plane is hijacked by terrorists pretending to be Sikhs with kirpans. They are navigating it to my home in Andheri to crash it there. Savita Bhabhi, alarmed at the impending attack on her favourite blogger, decides to intervene. The terrorists happen to also have weapons longer than their six-inch kirpans but Savita Bhabhi, ahem, disarms them.

Okay, enough now. Have a safe journey.

(Sikhnet link via email from [Rohan Oberoi](#). More on Savita Bhabhi: [1](#), [2](#).)

 Posted by Amit Varma in [Freedom](#) | [India](#) | [Politics](#) | [WTF](#)