

The Ideal for Women

Sir: "The concept of ideal woman in Guru Granth Sahib" by Bibi Kamal Preet Kaur (SR: Nov. '08) has inspired me to comment. There is no doubt that with advancement in technology in virtually every sphere of our life, the physical power of man has to retreat to the back stage. The brain is up front, as it should be, and the brawn is in use, for limited purposes only. The muscular power of man will not be totally eliminated, but its monopoly is over. Let us apply it in today's context: Guru Gobind Singh Ji set the concept of the Five Beloved. There was no women among them. The 40 Mukhtas were all male, except Mata Bhag Kaur's role.

In our times, however, male and female must be treated as equal. Our gurdwaras must bring in a change, including SGPC and Darbar Sahib at Amritsar. Women must be allowed to do Kirtan, recite Guru Granth Sahib and lead the community, if they have the voice majority through votes. Doors must be open to all, including Bibis. Let us change our male mentality. In today's world, women can compete for top posts, in political economic and social sphere.

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The Uncelebrated War Hero: Maj. Dr. Hari Singh

Sir, I refer to the evocative piece on Maj. Dr. Hari Singh (SR: Nov. '08). According to my late parents, I was born in the autumn of the year is 1928, presumably in the vicinity of 17th November. So when the Japanese bombed Penang (then Malay Peninsula) I was on the street with a few other boys counting the planes as they roared past. They used incendiary bombs, but did not hit any big building. I had to go to a Japanese school (during occupation) to learn their language. They were quick to open up schools to teach Japanese. Later, I attended the Trade school from where the Japanese (in 1940's) selected workers for their naval workshops. I worked there. Those who worked for the Japanese were given ration cards by which we could buy all our necessities at a very cheap rate. All transactions were done in Japanese notes called 'banana notes' for the tree printed thereon. These notes had no collateral value, being military issue.

When the Allies' B 29s came (in 1944) I was at the workshop on the pier. We were wonder-struck at the height they were flying and some even looked to be hovering in the sky in a static state. They used 500 pound explosive bombs that destroyed quite a number of big buildings, creating huge holes where they fell. On the first day of the bombing, five Sikhs who were working as guards at the workshops, took shelter in a channel. Unfortunately, a bomb fell there, and they were all killed. On the first day, as soon as I reached the workshop in the morning, the air raid siren resounded and we had to run to the shelters under huge trees situated across the Fort Cornwallis in the Esplanade, which had a wall built around it upto the Penang Harbour. As we reached the shelter, the all-clear siren was heard. When we returned to the workshop, bombs started falling and we had to run back to the shelters. As we were running, a fighter plane zoomed over us but did not open up machine-gun fire. Perhaps they saw two turbaned Sikhs among the crowd!

I have always enjoyed reading *The Sikh Review*. In fact I was a Life Member upto 1984, I think during the editorship of the late Capt. Bhag Singh. You are carrying on very ably the

work started by him. I wish you - and **The Sikh Review** - everlasting success.

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Anomaly in Indian Constitution

[Originally addressed to Sr. Jagpal Singh Tiwana (Canada)]

While Sikhism has long been recognized globally as a major religion, the Indian Constitution continues to be burdened by a sub-clause that brackets Sikhs (and Buddhists) as Hindus - in a ludicrous anomaly.

When I became Member of Parliament I moved a Private Members Bill for amendment of Section 25 of the Indian Constitution so that Sikhism is treated as an independent religion. In its present form, the Constitution regards Sikhs as part of Hinduism. An amendment is long overdue for getting us independent status. My Bill came before the House for discussion twice, but due to disturbances in the House no debate could take place. Now I am waiting for the next turn.

I also moved a proposal that a registration clause be added in the Anand Marriage Act of 1908. At present, the Sikh marriages can be solemnized as per Sikh rites, but there is no provision for registration of the marriage. Indeed the registration is done under Hindu Marriage Act! I succeeded in getting this proposal approved by the Parliamentary Committee for Law & Justice. The Law Minister had indeed announced in the Rajya Sabha House that the amendment Bill will be moved very soon. I am following this and have meetings with the Minister many times.

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