

## The Elusive Unity

Sir, - The Unity of Sikhs is in jeopardy. Our leaders and priests are quarrelling. Sikh youths are getting alienated. Apostasy is on the increase. Sikh institutions (Gurdwaras in particular) have become caste based and dysfunctional. Sikhs in North America (USA & Canada) are engaged in litigation, resulting in sacred Gurdwaras becoming battle fields.

Issues of transfer of Chandigarh, river water disputes, and transfer of Punjabi speaking areas, for which the Sikhs and Akalis have been agitating in the past, have not been solved inspite of the (failed) alliance of Akalis with the ruling BJP at the Center.

Suicide deaths in Punjab are continuing and are on the rise. Besides small farmers who are reeling under debt of Rs. 5700 crore, agricultural labourers and poor urban Sikhs are also resorting to suicides.

Crime against women, such as sexual harassment/abuse, divorce, rape, domestic violence, dowry deaths are on the increase. Female infanticide, destruction of female foetus are still being practiced, contributing to "Missing women". What is the use of introducing new legislation when existing legislation about women's welfare, like anti-dowry, sex determination tests, domestic violence, anti-sati and similar other laws are not being implemented?

Health care system in general is dysfunctional. Rural Punjab has been totally neglected. Old diseases, like TB and malaria, are reappearing. New diseases like HIV/AIDs are fast spreading. Contaminated sub soil water is creating water borne diseases. Heavy air and noise pollutions are taking its own toll.

Corruption is so rampant that Punjab govt. could not find any honest employee for the "Most Honest" award during 1998. Now it stands fully exposed - thanks to misdeeds of Ravinder Pal Singh Sandhu, the suspended Chairman, Punjab P.S.C.

Despite the change in government the "system" is in tact. Quality of common man has not improved. Problems of poverty, unemployment, alcohol & drug abuse, food insecurity, crime and such other serious problems have not been solved. Consumerism is playing havoc with Sikh way of life.

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## The Sikhs - A Martial Race

Sir, - This is with reference to Sr Hardyal Singh Paul's letter (*The Sikh Review*: DEc. 2001).

He has touched more than half a dozen themes without concrete evidence. Let me take note of the following three:

- a. 'That the concept of Martial Race was introduced by the British to pamper certain races.'
- b. 'That Banda Singh Bahadur lost to Mughals due to lack of organisation.'
- c. 'That after Maharaja Ranjit Singh, Sikhs lost due to lack of leadership.'

As regards 'A' above, I would ask for republication of an article by Lt. General Harwant Singh (Retd.) Dy. Chief of Army Staff, titled, 'Who says Martial Race is a Myth?'

Regarding 'B' above, serious students of history should read Dr. Ganda Singh's study *Banda Singh Bahadur*.

About 'C' above, I would suggest a close examination of some latest works on the subject, including my '*Anglo Sikh Wars*' (3rd edition, published by the S.G.P.C. Amritsar) so as to have a correct perspective of what actually went wrong with the Sikh empire after the great Maharaja's death.

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## Turban Triumph

Sir, - Most stalwarts of India's freedom struggle: Pt Madan Mohan Malviya, Balgangadhar Tilak, Lala Lajpat Rai, Gandhiji (prior to his visit to South Africa) and Dr Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan used to wear turbans. In addition to '*Mera rang de basanti chola*', it was '*pagri sambhal jatta...*' that used to be the household song in Punjab, and also in various other parts of India, before Independence.

The late Mr M.C. Chagla, eminent jurist and former foreign minister, paid the following tribute to the turban. In his autobiography, '*Roses in December*' (p. 111), he has written:

"I remember an incident which took place during one such visit to a disturbed locality. someone rushed out from the road side with a heavy bamboo stick and aimed what looked like a hefty blow at me. If that blow had fallen on my head, I would not be writing this autobiography today. Fortunatley for me, the blow fell on the head of a neighbour, who was a Sikh and had on him a turban. The force of the blow was lost among the thick folds of that magnificent turban and I turned to my friend and told him that I owed my life that day to him, or rather to the turban on his head."

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## **With God's Love, from Brazil**

### **A Poser for SGPC**

Sir, - About a year ago, I started an effort to know the Sikh faith, the most noble and important religion I have known. *Sikhi* has a well defined body of teachings, presents clear cut rules of secular behavior and provides an enriching and mystic way of life. I would like to issue a challenge to Sikhs worldwide in order to promote Guru Nanak's teachings outside Diaspora. Or, why not create a Sikh Diaspora in Brazil?

Although not encouraging proselytism, the Sikhs have the universal commitment of propagating the Truth contained in the SGGS.

In Brazil we have a suggestive situation. Although we are a Christian country, people are looking for practical ways to change their material and spiritual lives. Our traditional churches don't know how to face the new demands of society, which requires a more pragmatic approach to daily problems. We live in a growing violent society where the hope horizons are moving far away. Christian charismatic or neopentecostal movements are the only segment who shows an increasing number of members.

What about inviting Sikhs to come to Brazil? We must organize a Brazilian non-profit organization, with logistic and financial support from abroad. I am ready to offer my full time work, since international organizations have a real interest in financing multiple activities here.

Let us remember that a Sikh Missionary Center in Brazil is like managing a business in a very competitive scenario. It's work for professionals, not amateurs, and requires much more than a Great Ideal. It must be approached with updated management/marketing techniques. In Brazil, Sikhism must presents it pragmatic side.

We can start the projects even in the midst of difficult times. It may grows largely because of our commitment and belief that Sikh scriptures have the potential to transform pepole and the world around, promoting peace, justice and inner enlightenment.

The fundamental purpose of life is the search for Truth. After all our earthly achievements, we live in fear and uncertainty. People in Brazil, like in other countries, feel emptiness inside their hearts.

**Why not build a small but modern Gurdwara in Brazil following update trends in architecture? We have many empty buildings in our old downtown, ready to be retrofitted at a relatively low cost. This could motivate international contests for architectural projects. And what about establishing Pingalwara? We could spend time promoting, besides Gurbani studies, social and ecological awareness among Brazilians.**

I can offer my full time dedication as a Brazilian liaison for Sikh organizations, helping missionaries to learn Portuguese, doing translations and recommending specialized professionals, as accountants and lawyers, for establishing a non-profit organization, engineers and all kind of collaborators.

Finally, I disclose my email and address for contact:

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## **Sikh Identity & Gurdwara Feuds**

Sir: Apropos *The Sikh Review* Editorial (SR May 2002), whether or not the Gurdwaras, in India or abroad are under the control of Akal Takht, they are Guru's Court established in conformity with the Sikh *Rehat Maryada* as broadly laid down by SGPC.

Litigation in USA is not due to "Amritdhari or Keshadhari" controversy. It is due to incursion of "Monas/Patits" who, instead of practising the *Rehat Maryada*, wish to control Gurdwaras, much like Mahants, because they command power. Before 1984, many of them cut their hair and shaved beards and said goodbye to their turbans . Some of them now clamour for chairs only to acquire status and control over the *sangat*. Soon they will agitate for benches and chairs in the Gurdwaras as is in Churches! Any shaven man does not fall within the definition of a "Sikh", as rightly observed in the Editorial: "*The Sikh Identity is not Negotiable*" as well as well as Dr. I J Singh's article in the same Issue: "The Power of a Uniform and Ethics of Identity".

So, our advice to aspiring committee members: Live in accordance with the "*Gurbaani* and *Gurmat*" based on "Guru Granth Sahib and the Sikh Maryada." Serve Guru Panth by selection and not election.

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## India's President unavailable?

Sir, - The news of President staying away from Investiture of Air Chief Marshal Arjan Singh (SR May 2002) incensed someone so much that there is a whole article condemning him on the web site, [www.1947.It](http://www.1947.It), or [www.partitionofindia.com](http://www.partitionofindia.com)

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*[The President subsequently held an investiture for honouring Air Chief Marshal Arjan Singh, DFC, as Marshal of the I.A.F.]*

- Ed. S.R.]

