

## **Mobilize help for 1984 victims**

Sir, Over the past weeks, there has been lot of news of continued agony of the Sikh families of 1984 anti-Sikh massacre. Apart from the fact that those responsible for the riots have escaped the clutches of law, justice has not been done to victims, even as Sajjan Kumar, the main accused, has been acquitted.

It is of no use for victim families to burnt effigies of political leaders or protest against the govt.'s ineptitude to deal with those responsible. Let us pause and ponder. What has the Sikh Panth/SGPC done for these victims? While a lot was done immediately after the riots, in terms of providing daily relief, the victims have remained a neglected lot over the last decade.

Pride of being a Sikh is that we belong to a religion which daily prays for '*Sarbat ka bhala*' in which '*Kirat karna*', '*Nam Japna*' and '*vand chhakna*' is part of the daily life. '*Daan dena, seva karna*' are other two distinct characteristics of a Sikh. With this kind of the people of the Panth, there is no reason whatsoever, for anybody belonging to the Sikh Panth to be a destitute, living uncared for, in abject conditions, lacking moral, physical and financial support. Our brothers and sisters of 1984 riots are still living in neglect. It is a shame for the entire Panth. Without depending upon any agency/dept of the govt., the Panth should come forward and rehabilitate these families, so that they can start living in dignity. All these riot-victim families should be assigned to - or adopted - by some of the big rich gurdwaras of the cities, wherever the riot victims reside. The assigning of the families of Gurdwara's should include:

- a) Regular monthly (four figure) pension to the widows.
- b) Free education to their children till graduation.
- c) Some sort of accommodation (in or near the gurdwara premises for those totally rendered homeless.
- d) Adoption of destitute children.

With the resources the Gurdwara's and the Panth has, it should not be difficult even to construct a housing complex and provide accommodation to these victims of anti-Sikh riots on permanent basis.

A vigilance committee under a senior judge should be formed to monitor the support services to these victims and suggest anything that would ameliorate their lot. The means we have in plenty, it only requires honest, dedicated handling and organizing by the Panthic leaders. Let every member of the Sikh Panth inculcate pride in our great heritage.

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## **Do not meddle with Definitive Sikhism**

Sir, I am placing the following few lines for favour of publication in your esteemed journal.

Parminder Singh Sandhu of Glen Allen, USA, in his letter "Ambiguous Historians" [SR, March 2003] has cleverly chosen to air some untenable views. Firstly, he talks of Khushwant Singh writing about "assassination " of Guru Gobind Singh Ji at Nander. I had also done so. Does he mean that Guru Gobind Singh was murdered? Secondly, he objects "to certain distortions" in my work , "*The Sikhs in History*", particularly of referring to the Sikh *amrit* ceremony or Sikh baptism. In the next para he cleverly mentions Sardar Tarlochan Singh's opinion that "it is not necessary to take *amrit*", but adds his own view that "every Sikh must take *amrit*."

Mr. Sandhu must understand that the definition of a Sikh is given in *Guru Granth Sahib*: a *Sikh* who is a *Gursikh*, a Sikh of Guru Nanak-Guru Gobind Singh. This is amplified in the Sikh Gurdwara Act of 1925 and later in Delhi Sikh Gurdwara Act of 1972, as one who has faith in Ten Sikh Gurus and has no other faith. *Rehat maryada* adopted by SGPC also talks in the same sense.

The Sikh *Ardas* gives definition of a Gursikh when one recites:

"Turn your thoughts to the deeds of these disciples of both sexes who offered their heads for the sake of their faith, were cut to pieces, got their skulls removed, were mounted on spinning wheels, were sawn alive, offered sacrifices in preferring services in Gurdwaras, did not lose their faith - kept long hair till their last breath, O Khalsa, utter Waheguru."

Seen in this light, Sant Nirankaris, Namdharis, Beasawale, various Sant-Babas who have faith in a present guru are not Sikhs, nor are *sehajdharis* or those who believe in other faiths or *patits* (renegades) who have fallen from ideals of Sikh Panth.

In America, Britain and certain other countries, I have come across these *patits* who, with the help of so-called *sehajdharis*, have ousted Gursikhs from the management of Sikh shrines, or have gone to courts, say in N. America, etc. to assert their rights to manage the Sikh shrines as, in their contention, *amrit* ceremony is not an essential part of Sikhism. I leave it to the local Gursikhs to decide whether these things are done at the instance of Indian intelligence agencies, or other factors.

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## **Holy Babas & SGPC**

Sir, I refer to S. Sarjit Singh's letter (SR April 2003) wherein he recognizes the damage being done by unscrupulous 'Sant-Babas'. However, the solution he offers of "exposing their wrongdoings" to the literate segment of society in a hope that they will shamefully wind up their shop would, I feel, be an exercise in futility. Sitting in distant USA, it is indeed difficult to visualize the extent to which the Sant/Baba dispensation has made inroads and in amassing wealth and political patronage that they command. This has to be taken in account for any meaningful resolution of problem. Not very long ago, some Akali Dal ministers of Punjab were found to be regular devotees at the Dera of a notorious Baba from Ropar.

The Singh Sabha movement has been hijacked by rich businessmen, along with career politicians, both with perfunctory knowledge of '*Gurbani*' and true heritage of the Sikhs. Once they get hold the administration of any Gurdwara they promptly start using the same as their personal fiefdom, and deploy Gurdwara funds to perpetuate themselves in power - not very different from the ways of 'Mahants' of pre-1925 AD era. When the present day Sikh 'Sangat' is not able to get rid of such bigoted, intolerant and violent managements, it will be too much to expect that they can expose and dispose of fake Sant-Babas who, all said and done, are very well versed not only in '*Gurbani*', but also in matters of divinity and spiritualism in their own ways, and are generally well established politically.

The 'Sants' are a significant ingredient of the Sikh sensitivity once when '*Gurbani*' is dwelled upon. So, rather than seek-and-destroy bad 'Sants', it will be more appropriate to establish 'Good Sants' by training, promoting, regulating, propagating, and authorizing desirable incumbents. The SGPC who has primary responsibility for propagation of the Sikh religion should take upon itself this task, with its vast resources in manpower and materials. The roadside Babas, with their considerable financial and political clout, would naturally react and try to bring in forces of *status quo* to frustrate such a move. But, here, the Sikh intelligentsia must come forward to lend their full unflinching support for this worthy cause.

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### **“Dual Doctrine” is confusing!**

Sir, The doctrine of Guru Granth and Guru Panth used by Dr Kharak Singh [SR: January 2003] to explain the inclusion of *Banis* from Dasam Granth in the *nitnem* raises more questions for him to answer.

We are talking of two “independent entities” in Sikhism, that is Guru Granth and Guru Panth. The questions which crop up are (i) Does Guru Granth enjoy higher status than Guru Panth? (ii) Does Guru Panth enjoys higher status than Guru Granth? (iii) Are they equal and identical in their status, just like identical twins? (iv) Does Guru Panth enjoy higher status than Guru Gobind Singh Jee? (v) Does Guru Gobind Singh Jee enjoy higher status than Guru Panth?

This type of questions are being asked in the Diaspora by the younger generation which is growing up in the countries where Sikhs have settled and raising their children. The Sikh scholars have a hard job in interpreting *gurbani* to the satisfaction of innocent enquiring minds amongst Sikhs, in general, and Sikh youth, in particular. Our *granthis* are not adequately trained for such an arduous task ahead of them. We are likely to lose some of our precious wealth if the parents do not take a note of the seriousness of this problem.

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**A letter from Sr. Khushwant Singhji  
on *The Sikh Review*, Feb. 2003 special issue dedicated to  
him**

Dear Saran Singh Ji,

I am overwhelmed! Never before have I been reduced to tears of gratitude. My own people claiming me as one of their own despite my shenanigans and forays into agnosticism. I can't find words to express my gratitude to you.

Thanks

Yours

Khushwant Singh

12 Feb. 2003