

## Quality Education:

It is a stark fact that parents of Sikh children have to seek admission for their wards in Christian convents and DAV schools, paying higher fees and building donations, because of their higher standards. Why can't Sikh schools provide comparable levels? Quality education for our younger generation should be a top priority for Sikhs. Sadly all donations and offerings by Sikhs is spent on Gurdwaras for marble floor, deluxe buildings and free kitchen, leaving nothing for improving the standards of existing schools, or for opening new ones. It is vitally important that our youth should have education in a Panthic environment. One of the main causes for apostasy, in my opinion, is the environment in which they have to study.

In Sahibzada Ajit Singh Nagar we have as many as thirteen Gurdwaras, having palatial Buildings, langar halls, free kitchen. Barring a few, *sangat* is scarcely found in these Gurdwaras. In my view one Gurdwara for every two sectors should be enough to attract good gathering, and funds spent on the rest of Gurdwaras can better be used for opening Sikh schools/colleges with higher standards than the Christians and DAVs schools so as to attract students of other communities in these schools too.

If the conversion of a disused church in UK into a Gurdwara evokes no ill feeling amongst Christians, the conversion of surplus Gurdwaras into ideal Sikh schools should be a welcome step among our masses. There is only one church in Phase III-A in SAS Nagar. Before the Church came up, St. Xavier H/S sector 71 catered to the need of education in Mohali, although Christian population is minimal here. They preach more through schools than in churches.

If we want to be progressive, let schools be our priority. I would earnestly appeal our Sikh leaders/management of Gurdwaras not to spend lavishly, but set apart major portion of the donations to improve the quality of the existing Sikh schools and open new ones with modern facilities.

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## The SGPC Electoral Mess

Sir,- Our Gurdwaras were liberated from the corrupt Mahants after great sacrifices. Our Gurus saved us from greedy preachers. But are the present day leaders of our community any the less avaricious? Two premier bodies of Sikhs, i.e. S.G.P.C. and D.S.G.M.C. are required to uphold the standards of morality in management of Gurdwaras. What happened in last election of the S.G.P.C. office holders? Over one hundred members were held willing captives at a farm house, lavishly entertained for two weeks, transported in luxury vehicles, and then airlifted to Amritsar, to cast votes for a body that administers the historic shrines. Similarly, in the election for the executive posts in D.S.G.M.C. members are being enticed with hefty bribes to caste vote to a particular group. Does this augur well for the community's future?

Should the Sangat remain helpless watchers or should we face life's challenges head on, and regain our moral heritage?

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## **Dietics in Sikhism: Let Prof. Gurtej Singh ji Clarify**

This has reference to Prof Gurtej Singh's article on "Woman, the other half doorway to Moksha", ("The Sikh Review", September 2003). It is indeed enlightening and informative about various misconception prevailing among Sikhs on the rights of woman to participate in rituals, Seva, kirtan and recitations of Gurbani, especially at Harimandir Sahib, Amritsar. The hymns in Sri Guru Granth Sahib and the message of Sikh Gurus, which ought to be accepted in letter and spirit. The controversy engineered by some individuals and institutions is not only meaningless, but damaging to Sikh ethos.

A clarification is, however, needed in support of his assertion at page 35: "Vegetarianism becoming a fetish is also a later development. Guru Nanak and Guru Angad both are known to have eaten meat. We know from later history that meat was cooked and consumed by the Sikhs, in the very vicinity of the Akal Takht up to 1725 CE".

The learned scholar to quote the source of this statement, lest it should breed confusion in the mind of Sikh devotees, and before any damage is done to Sikh heritage by the outsiders who are ever on the look out for a pretext to malign our religion and history.

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## **Human Rights in India**

While, International Court of Justice at the Hague is prosecuting ex-presidents for violation of human rights and crimes against humanity, in India, nineteen years after the massacre of thousands of innocent Sikhs, government continues to dither over, the prosecution of the ringleaders who masterminded these heinous crimes.

In 1984 India's Prime Minister openly declared that no action was called, because "where a big tree falls, the earth was bound to shake". The Congress party lost the 1989 election. But every government that followed, failed to take any concrete action, except commissions of enquiry. None of these commissions has produced any tangible results.

The present B.J.P. led coalition, on which the Sikh community pinned high hopes, has also not done anything beyond appointing yet another commission. Meanwhile, all evidence has been systematically destroyed by self-serving police, and the alleged culprits are being discharged by the courts for want of enough evidence. The Government sometimes gives the impression of being more concerned about

projecting the police officers responsible for eliminating thousands of young Sikhs in fake encounters, rather than bringing the culprits of November 1984 to justice.

One wonders whether any action will ever be taken to wipe out this ugly blot on India's fair name. I am reminded of an Urdu couplet, which seems to aptly sum up the state of affairs:

*"Wohi qatil, wohi shahid, wohi munsif thehray  
Aqriba karen mayray khoon ka daava kis par"*

*(The same person happens to be the killer, the witness, and the judge, Whom can my near and dear ones sue for my murder?)*

I urge Sikh leaders to ensure that in future election, the community extends its support only to a political party that, guarantee punishment to the guilty. The party should also solemnly assure protection against hooliganism of the type witnessed in 1984, to all citizens of the world's largest democracy.

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