

A LETTER TO SPOKESMAN WEEKLY

How Safe is Religion and Culture ?

INSTITUTE FOR UNDERSTANDING SIKHISM

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S. Joginder Singh
Chief Editor
Spokesman Weekly
602 Sector 10-D
Chandigarh 1 160 011
India

Dear Sirdar Joginder Singh Jee,

Subject: How Safe is Religion and Culture in the Universities of Punjab.

It was my great pleasure to have a long and productive discussion with you during the last week of March at your residence when we discussed about the present situation of Sikhism passing through and its future. I was greatly impressed with your dedication towards the welfare of Sikhism.

Journalism is a very tough job to report the real situation because everyone looks at it according to one's own angle and ignore the other sides. Therefore, it is the duty of a good journalist to look into the situation passionately and in its real perspective.

Everybody is aware that the Universities of Punjab are not doing their job up to the expectations of the people of the Punjab. They are holding conferences secretly without giving advance notices to all the Sikh scholars but by inviting their own favourite scholars and politicians to please them. No serious discussions are held and even sometimes not enough time is given to scholars to present their views. Similarly, various Sikh Intellectual Groups and Institutions hold conferences secretly without open invitation to every scholar. They too invite the scholars of their own choice to please them. It is the duty of the journalists to point out such lethargies or wrong policies being adopted in the universities and by the Sikh Institutions. It is a high time to evaluate the role of the universities of the Punjab, including the Punjab University in Chandigarh and the various Sikh Institutions, including various *Santdoms*, in dissemination of Sikhism and Gurbani in their real perspective.

I read a recent report from your University Reporter as cited in the subject in the May issue of the Spokesman. I found that the efforts of Dr Jasbir Singh Mann for dissemination of Sikhism in the west through conferences, publication of proceedings and books, have been ignored. Similarly, the work of Dr Bhai Harbans Lal for preaching Gurbani based on the philosophy incorporated in the Aad Guru Granth Sahib, has been undermined. Both of them deserve laurels rather than any disrespect. The other scholars from foreign countries, who participated in various conferences to present their views, should have been encouraged. Many of them are spending lots of money from their own pockets to serve the Sikh cause in the west.

There is no doubt that Sikhism is passing through the similar situation of late 19th and early 20th centuries when the Arya Samaj started to amalgamate Sikhism into Hinduism. At that time it were Gurmukh Singh, Ditt Singh, Bhai Vir Singh, Karam Singh, a Historian, and others who through the Singh Sabha defended Sikhism in spite of the fact that some of their own members were siding with the Arya Samajists. Now is the same situation again and there is great threat to Sikhism from the outside as well as inside. First we have to look into the inside danger from those who are not sincere to Sikhism. They may be highly placed persons in clergy, politics, universities or in various

Sikh institutions, including various *Santdoms*.

The first and foremost duty of Sikh scholars and Sikh journalists is to get together to set the things in order at home and stop levelling allegations on each other. During my stay from February to April in India I attended many conferences, meet with many Sikh dignitaries and Sikh Intellectual groups. I found that everyone had their own agenda and everyone thinks he/she is the only saviour of Sikhism and only his/her way of Sikhism is the real Sikhism. We have to sit together to decide, who is the real saviour of Sikhism and how to save it from its further degeneration and how to put it on its real perspective.

It is a huge task. Let us all join hands to fulfil the mission of Guru Nanak to disseminate his message to the humanity of this planet, the earth, through holding conferences and publication of books on Sikhism and Gurbani in their real perspective from today onward to the year 2004 to the celebration of the Quadricentennial of Compilation of the Greatest and Holiest Scriptures, the Aad Guru Granth Sahib.

With regards.

Sincerely Yours

(SIGNED by D. S. Chahal)

Prof Devinder Singh Chahal, PhD

Editor-in-Chief

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