

[Can Religious Will Heal the Punjab? Interview](#)

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Can Religious Will Heal the Punjab? Interview Toward a New Sikh/Hindu Unity

Vinayaga, Sadhaka Dasa Shamsar Singh, a 60-year-old Sikh from India, visited major North American cities for three weeks in July establishing chapters of the "Rasthriya Sikh Sangat" to bring Sikhs and Hindus together. An electrical engineer by profession, Mr. Singh is one of the founders of the Vishva Hindu Parishad of Uttar Pradesh, author of Ramavatar, a biography of Lord Rama, and founder of the "Guru Gobind Singh Sahitya Prasaran" publishing house. Mr. Singh is also well-versed in Sikh and Hindu scriptures.

HT: Mr. Singh, please explain the meaning and purpose of "Rasthriya Sikh Sangat."

SS: "Rasthriya Sikh Sangat" means "National Sikh Forum." In the U.S., it is called the "Sikh Forum of America." In the sacred scriptures of India, the only one that speaks of Hindustan or Hindu is the Sikh scripture, Guru Granth Saheb. I have been speaking to everyone of how Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh taught the unity of Sikhs within the Hindu culture. In the Gita, Ramayana, Vedas, Mahabharata there is no reference to Hindu or Hindustan. These words appear for the first time in scripture in the Guru Granth Saheb. The purpose of the Rasthriya Sikh Sangat is to help Sikhs and non-Sikhs remember that we are one, from the same heritage, and not divided as some people and forces are trying to make us. The organization is to caution people from trying to seek a separate identity on the basis of language. Sikhs have their identity. It was given to us by the guru. We cannot lose that identity unless we lose the Guru Granth Saheb, the Gita, Ramayana and Vedas.

HT: The Forum is less than one year old. How large is it at this time?

SS: In India we have 19 chapters. By March of next year we should have 85. In

North America, we have chapters in Chicago, New York, Washington, D.C., Los Angeles, Boston, Orlando, Houston, Raleigh, N.C., and Montreal and Toronto, Canada. More are expected in the U.S. this summer.

HT: You have indicated that the organization will hold meetings to strengthen the unity of Sikhs and Hindus, but not to take specific actions. This will be helpful for the members, but how do you see this affecting the people who are actually fighting each other in the Punjab?

SS: This is the only way to induce peace. The teachings of these scriptures are love and peace. The way of vengeance cannot succeed.

HT: What, then, is the origin of the problem?

SS: The origin of the problem is ignorance of the scriptures and absence of the real, true spirit of Hinduism. Sikhs are extensions of Hinduism as arms are of the body. It is only in the last 7 to 10 years that a few have demanded a separate nation for Sikhs.

HT: How could a few cause such a major problem between Sikhs and Hindus?

SS: It is quite possible for a little poison to spoil a whole body.

HT: Would you say that the problem is a political one?

SS: Definitely. It is political, but it cannot be solved politically. We have to create the patriotism and knowledge of the scriptures. These will overcome the greed and hatred of a few. We got the patriotism started with Gandhiji. We know how this is done.

HT: So, you are trying to inspire patriotism for India to solve the problem between Sikhs and Hindus in the Punjab?

SS: Yes, patriotism for India based on the teachings of Guru Nanak is what I am trying to create. Because Guru Nanak has said, "I shall sacrifice my body that India may prevail."

HT: Historically, political forces of division are seldom influenced by religious restraints. What makes you feel that religious power can resolve matters in the Punjab?

SS: The scriptures are in the hands of the wrong people in the Punjab. We must get them back into the proper hands. Unfortunately, the Sikhs do not have teachers. It is the scripture, the Guru Granth Saheb, only that is the teacher of the Sikhs. Therefore, Sikhs have no [effective] priests. When Guru Gobind Singh created the Khalsa, he created the body of Sikh priests, which are very good priests, but they have lost their influence.

HT: Ultimately, how will the religious forces you are promoting ever reach the center of political control in the Punjab?

SS: You see, the saturation point is coming. The people are fed up with the economic conditions created over there. The Khali Party is now divided. When the religious conditions are created there and the people can come together in the name of religion, you will see that neither the Congress nor the Khali Party will be in power in the Punjab. Peace will return. It will be like what happened in Harayana. The people will reject the Congress and various parties will jointly come to power.

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