

mandirs, mosques, Buddhist temples – but no gurdwaras. Why not? Simply, no Sikh group has taken it upon itself to be sure that every city guide in Canada lists a gurdwara in its visitors' catalogue. A simple thing, but a telling example. The Sikhs, though a key part of the Canadian multicultural mosaic, are also simply out of the mainstream.

If the Sikh community could really pull together, could transition from the shouting to the working phase, it could do several things that I think are first steps toward real effectiveness as a global movement

First, it would be necessary to conduct a series of well-thought-out workshops on the question of how the Sikh religion intersects with Punjabi culture. Sikhism is a universal faith, of course, yet we all know plainly that most gurdwara services are conducted in Punjabi, that Punjabi cultural values permeate everything Sikh. There are so many valuable things about this heritage. But, on the language issue especially, the continued use of Punjabi mono-lingually at events such as this one, at which one is trying to approach non-Sikhs who clearly do not understand the language, cannot be of help to a movement that is serious about its aims. In this age of technology, simultaneous translation running on a screen behind the speaker is easily possible; I've seen it among Kashmiris, who are way ahead of the Sikhs in terms of professionalization of a movement.

**S**econd, I think it is time that the community hire on a permanent basis a small team of top flight international lawyers, who can be at the ready for opportunities like alien torts (through which, for example, an Indian human rights abuser could be sued in a Canadian court), who could approach UNESCO on the World Heritage Status of the Golden Temple Complex, who could be called upon on issues regarding the international humanitarian laws of war. This team could proactively work to ensure recognition of Sikh rights in every country where Sikhs live, instead of waiting for individual cases to react to. It could work on what the notion of self-determination actually means, in this 21st century, and explore other options for representation of sub-state collectivities.

Third, the community should hire real lobbyists, professional lobbying firms, in Washington, Ottawa, and London. Not just a few Sikhs with the passion for a cause, but a professional firm trained to advertize and push through an agenda. This is exactly what the government of India has done, and it is what you must do, as well. The sense of mistrust for non-Sikhs is antiquarian, and must be gotten over. Simply expect to hire and pay for the best. They will come to know well the environments of the capitals, know which bills should be supported and how to support them, and be able to think through how the assertion of Sikh rights, or a potential Sikh state, could benefit others.

Fourth, there should be a rotating youth initiative, perhaps set up as internships, to keep track of how the community is being perceived on the internet and to push the Sikh agenda electronically. Likewise, this group of young people, being unattached, could spring into action when opportunities presented themselves such as organizing aid to flood victims in New Orleans. Or, for



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example, I just found out tonight that the Council of Bishops in the Catholic Church have a firm principle that places of worship are inviolable. Young people, find out such a fact and having grown up here, more familiar with other faiths, could approach the Bishops and find out how to perhaps use this principle to protect the Golden Temple, perhaps to mobilize Catholics around the Sikh cause.

Fifth, the Sikh diasporan community must set up its own academic foundation. This foundation would fund scholarly research and writing projects on the Punjab conflict, human rights, and Sikhism in order to make sure that the tragic episode of the past two decades cannot be ignored in the historical record. It could also conduct workshops to help Punjabi scholars learn the standards of international academic publishing, and perhaps help link Western scholars to Punjabi scholars for entrée into Punjab. Most important, its financial support would enable the subaltern or nonstandard Sikh Studies, which views matters from the ground up rather than from New Delhi down, to continue to function and flourish.

phase of a movement like this one. It evokes much popular admiration and establishes legendary, even mythic, reputations, but it rarely wins battles.

The same is true on the political side. Loud demonstrations have their place, certainly, and so do vehement essays and provocative speeches that boil the blood of those whose souls have been wounded. But in a more mature second phase, the hard work of actually making something happen has to be brought into place. It takes discipline, time, and a long-term vision – probably a generational vision. The Irish had that vision and held onto it. Can the Sikhs?

**I**t is true that my list of desiderata will cost a great deal of money. But then, the stakes are very high – the preservation and protection of a religion, the defense of human rights, the self-determination of a nation. It is up to every Sikh to decide whether it is worth it. In my view spending money in a disciplined, accountable manner of proven effectiveness is far preferable than the current wastage in which cash slips through the cracks of gurdwara elections, individual court cases, this or that local action, one upmanship between factions. Get with it! Make your funding and your hard work count.

As for the silencing with which I began my remarks, I beg you . . . to hell with it! In my community we have a saying that the nail which sticks up will get hammered down. That may be true, but still I've always gone ahead and been that nail. A book I've been reading called "A Person of Interest," by Julia Choi, provides another metaphor: a field of poppies, in which the tall ones are likely to get plucked. With Sikhs wearing those lovely saffron turbans, that is perhaps the better analogy. Please, for God's sake, for the sake of Sikhi, don't be those poppies that bow their heads down, trying to hide somehow in the crowd. Be the tall, proud poppies that stand out in your Canadian field, where every law protects your right to do so.

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