

April 16th

COMMUNITY

Misguided Sikhs hurt all others

Why is it I am no longer surprised when a new acquaintance tells me she can't help associating the word Sikh with violence and terrorism? Why too, do I feel a need to defend a religion which isn't even my own?

Maybe it's because the Sikh religion as I see it is more a way of life, a simple lifestyle lived the way they believe God would wish them to do. A lifestyle which fits into any religion.

As has happened to many other minority groups, Sikhs everywhere are being tarred with the same brush. Or, as has been said many times, a few have spoiled it for the rest.

A few misguided souls seem to have lost sight of the true meaning of Sikhism or perhaps have twisted the teachings of the gurus to suit their own needs.

The Sikh religion is a comparatively young religion, one which began 1,500 years after Christianity. Guru Nanak, the founder of the Sikh way of life, had studied both the Hindu and the Moslem faiths, the two religions of India. He travelled not only through India but into other countries of the east and visited the holiest places of each.

Convinced there could be only one God and that he is a kind and loving God, he denounced the cruel caste system and to prove that all men and women are equal, initiated a style of worship where all sit on the floor together to ensure that no one is higher than another. Following the religious services, men and women of all walks of life sit down to a meal together and each one takes a turn at the labors involved in providing for so many.

Sevo, which means 'God's work', plays an important role in the life of a Sikh. All work in and around the temple complex is volunteer labor. In the Punjab many widows have devoted their remaining years to service in the temple where the doors are never locked and the people come in at all times of the day and night.

One only needs to take a close look at the teachings of the first Guru to realize the true meaning of this simple but basic religion. Earn only by honest means, share what you have with the needy, remember we are all equal in the eyes of God, begin and end each day with praise of God and keep him in your mind all day in everything you do.

He encouraged his followers to gather each morning and evening to listen to his teachings and to sing praises to God. Now every village and hamlet has a temple which the



Indo Canadian

By Joan Mayo

in the evening for Kurtan, which is the singing of the hymns written over the years by the 10 successive Gurus.

The tenth and last Guru decreed that there be no living Guru after him but that the people should assemble regularly to listen to the writings of the ten Gurus as written in the holy book and that the book be treated as a living Guru.

There is no sabbath in the Sikh religion. Instead, every day is God's day and most Sikhs spend time first thing in the morning and then again in the evening at prayer and reading the holy Granth Sahib. Like our Christian bible, the Sikh Holy Book teaches it's followers to live honest, productive lives and fortunately most believers of the Sikh faith live their lives in quiet union with God.

It is only a few who have allowed their dissatisfaction with their lot in life to take control of their senses. Perhaps it is time again for one such as Mahatma Gandhi to emerge, one who advocates change by peaceful methods and who will encourage a trust of their fellow men. For only when the various religions learn to live together in harmony will we see an end to the violence.

The Sikhs have a very strong faith in God's will. A faith I have had the privilege of sharing many times. The year my little grandson was seriously injured and the doctor had told us that if he could survive the first 72 hours he would be over the worst, I ran to my Sikh friend, who worked with me, and she threw her arms around me, held me close and said, "It's in God's hands now. He won't let you down." Her faith and assurance helped me through a very difficult ordeal and once again proved we are all children of the one God.

Look past the misguided ones and make friends with a Sikh who is quiet and unassuming and you'll