

Talk on E.A. Sikh Association

by Chanan Singh B.A. (1954)

At the very outset, I must express my indebtedness to the E. A. Cable and Wireless Ltd. For kindly giving me the opportunity to talk, on behalf of the E.A.Sikh Association, to the Sikh denizens of the East African Territories, on this auspicious occasion of the 188th birth anniversary of our Lord, Guru Govind Singh Ji.

Sikhs of the east African Territories, most of you must have heard of the East African Sikh Association, or, may be, you might have read its organ, 'The Pioneer', and its 'Aims and Objects' that appeared in the Pioneer's issue of 1954; but amongst you there might be some who as yet might not know anything about this Association. This talk of mine in which I will endeavour to describe in outline the aims and objects of this Association, is addressed to the former in general and to the latter in particular.

Before I tell you about the programme of this Association, it would not, in order to allay any misgivings in the minds of the misinformed, be out of place to say a word about the people who are responsible for the establishing of this organisation and about the necessity of forming this association, when there are in the field so many other Sikh institutions which have been active for the last fifty years or over.

The promoters of this Association are a handful of the disciples of Guru Nanak. They do not lay any pretensions to leadership nor do they arrogate to themselves high religiosity or any type of other superiority, but they do have the welfare of the Sikhs most near to their heart and are fired up by the idea of promoting their well-being so that they may take their rightful place in these multi-racial territories. They aim at evolving unity out of disunity that prevails in the ranks of the Sikhs. They want to bring all the dissident factions of the Sikhs on a common platform so that they may achieve their common ends.

So much about the promoters; now something about the necessity of the Association. I would say that this Association is the objectification of the sentiments of most of the Sikhs. A vast majority of them felt the want of an Association that could look after the this-worldly interests of the community, as none of the existing institutions jumped, and rightly too, out of the other-worldly aims; but we, being in this world though not of this world, cannot afford to shut our eyes to our social, cultural, and economic interests. None of our religious institutions has been able to effect any social amelioration, though the lofty principles of Sikhism aim at the uplift of man and society and bend their force to restore man to the dream and glory of the millennium. In our temples, we daily recite, 'God is our father and we all, being His children, are brothers and sisters'; but as soon as we return home, we again are the same old stiff-necked 'haves' looking down upon the 'have-nots', or puffed up 'blue-bloods' scorning the so called 'base-borns'.

In order to answer the demands of time in the context of the set-up of things as they are and to curve the above-alluded-to pernicious propensities in our society, the handful of well-intentioned Sikhs of whom I have talked above have brought this Association into being. This is the avowed policy of this Association to hold itself aloof from dabbling,

both by omission and commission, in politics; but in its proper sphere that is on the social, cultural, religious and economic side, the Association aims at doing its utmost. It is pursuing a well-chalked-out programme for bringing into its fold all Sikhs with divergent denominational allegiances and is pressing its all resources into service for propagating Sikhism and promoting better understanding of other social patterns towards the Sikhs by expounding the golden principles of Guru Nanak.

To this end the Association has already instituted its monthly organ which is issued from Nairobi. This bulletin, in addition to this report on the progress made by the Association, includes very illuminating articles on subjects, literary, historical, social, cultural and religious. The inauguration of this monthly has been warmly welcomed by all the right-thinking Sikhs in these Territories and members of other communities have sent congratulations to the Association, hailing the inception of the Association and its organ as being symptomatic of the social awakening among the Sikhs. Among the subscribers to the monthly are some Europeans who have very much appreciated the character of the bulletin.

The membership of the Association is open to all Sikhs above the age of eighteen years. Members pay subscription at the rate of Shgs 10/- per year. Annual subscription in respect of the 'Pioneer' is Shgs 20/-. The Association aims at acquiring its own printing press which will be at the disposal of the entire Sikh Community. Every Sikh, whether he is a member of the Association or not, shall have full right to use it for the expression of his views regarding the furtherance of the cause of the community in various fields of activities envisaged in the Constitution of the Association. The having of its own press is vital importance to the advancement of any people. Even the Africans have a well-established press. They are said to publish as many as 42 papers in their different dialects.

The patrons of this Association have been drawn from different parts of these Territories and they come from all walks of life so that the Association is representative of all shades of opinion among the Sikhs. It has Singh Sabhites as well as Ramgarhias among its ranks. Any further information regarding the Association can be had from the Secretary, East African Sikh Association, P O Box 584, Nairobi. I would appeal to each and every Sikh in these Territories to rally round the flag of this Association to make the Khalsa a great social force.

In the end I extend, on behalf of the E>A> Sikh Association, my heartiest greetings to all my listeners, on the 288th anniversary of Guru Givind Singh Ji, the father of the Khalsa, on whose august birthday, let us reaffirm our loyalty and devotion to the Khalsa.

Thank you.