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Title: Need to implement the recommendations of the National Commission to review the working of the Constitution.

SHRI PREM SINGH CHANDUMAJRA (ANANDPUR SAHIB): At present, explanation II under Article 25 states- "In sub-clause (b) of clause (2), the reference to Hindus shall be construed as including a reference to persons professing the Sikh, Jain or Buddhist religion, and the reference to Hindu religious institutions shall be construed accordingly". The clubbing in the relevant clause of Hindus and Sikhs together gave a wrong impression and had proved detrimental to the interests of the Sikh community. Even two Sikh members in the Constituent Assembly representing the Shiromani Akali Dal had refused to put their signatures on the final draft of the Constitution of India.

The Sikh community, including political leaders of all shades and hues as well as the religious authorities, have all along maintained that clubbing Sikhs with Hindus in Article 25 of the Constitution had impinged on its status as separate religion.

The stand of the Sikh community that any dilution of Sikhism *vis-a-vis* Hinduism or any other religion should be removed had found favor with the National Commission to Review the Working of the Constitution headed by the former Chief Justice of India, justice M.N. Venkatachaliah which submitted its report on March 31,2002.

On the "Right to Freedom of Religion" and the issue of Article 25 diluting the identity of the Sikhs, the Commission had observed that the reference to Hindus "should be construed as including a reference to Sikhs, etc."

The recommendation of the Commission in this regard said: "The commission, without going into the larger issue on which the contention is based, is of the opinion that the purpose of the representations would be served if explanation II to Article 25 is omitted and sub-clause (b) of clause (2) of the Article is reworded as follows- (b) providing for social welfare and reform or the throwing open of Hindu, Sikh, Jain or Buddhist religious institutions of a public character to all classes and sections of these religions."

The present Government will have to come forward with the necessary amendment to Article 25 as suggested by the Commission way back in 2002 to remove the impression that Sikhism is being diluted. This applies to Jain and Buddhist communities as well. A Bill to amend the Constitution as per the report of the Commission should be brought by the Government in this session itself.