



State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations

DEPARTMENT OF ATTORNEY GENERAL
150 South Main Street, Providence, RI 02903
(401) 274-4400
TDD (401) 453-0410

Sheldon Whitehouse, Attorney General

September 9, 2002

Norman G. Orodnenker, Esq.
Tillinghast, Licht, Perkins, Smith & Cohen, LLP
Ten Weybosset Street
Providence, Rhode Island 02903-2818

Dear Mr. Orodnenker:

Last fall, in the aftermath of the 9-11 tragedy and as a direct result of the Sher Singh case, the community in Rhode Island and New England had the opportunity to learn much about Sikhism and about Sikh citizens in our community. The lessons we learned included the five symbols of the Sikh faith, especially the "kirpan," worn by devout Sikhs.

During our review of the Sher Singh case, it was clear to us that Mr. Singh carried a kirpan only as a religious symbol, and had no intention of using the kirpan as a weapon. Thus, we advised the City of Providence, that had brought the criminal charge against him, that this Department would not prosecute Mr. Singh if his case reached this office.

We are hopeful that law enforcement agencies will recognize the inherent religious nature of a kirpan, and also recognize that those who carry a kirpan only as a symbol of faith should not be subjected to criminal prosecution.

Very truly yours,

Gerald J. Coyne
Deputy Attorney General