

SIKH HERITAGE EDUCATION & CULTURAL ORGANIZATION OF AMERICA, INC.

February 25, 2022

Honorable S. Harjinder Singh Dhani
President SGPC

Honorable Giani Harpreet Singh
Jathedar Sri Akal Takht Sahib

Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee

Teja Singh Samundari Hall, Golden Temple Complex, Amritsar, Punjab, India 143044

RE: Letter to SGPC From Concerned Sikhs

Hon. Pres. And Jathedar Ji,

On November 15, 1920, in the vicinity of Akal Takht in Amritsar, emerging Sikh leaders summoned a general assembly of the Sikhs, holding all shades of opinions. The purpose of this assembly was to elect a representative committee of Sikhs to administer the Harimandar Sahib complex and other significantly historic Gurdwaras. Two days prior to the proposed conference, the British government set up its own committee, composed of thirty-six members, for the same purpose. The Sikhs held their scheduled meeting and elected a larger committee of 175 members, known as the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee. They also included members of the government appointed committee, as S. Harbans Singh Attari was the Vice President and Sunder Singh Ramgarhia was the Secretary. The committee's formation provided a focal point for the movement of the reformation of Sikh religious places. The Committee took over management of Gurdwaras one by one and was resisted by incumbent mahants.

SGPC and Shiromani Akal Dal initiated a nonviolent struggle against the government and mahants for the control of Gurdwaras. After considerable struggle and sacrifices, in 1925, then governor of Punjab, Malcom Hailey, presented a draft a new Gurdwara Bill to the Akali leaders imprisoned in Lahore fort. Master Tara Singh, Advocate Bhag Singh, Advocate Gurcharan Singh, Teja Singh Akerpuri (Jathedar Akal Takht), Sohan Singh Josh, and S. Teja Singh Samundari studied and reviewed each clause of the bill carefully. The bill met all the Akali Dal demands and was ratified by the Punjab legislature counsel and thereafter signed into law on July 28, 1925, by the Viceroy of India. The Act came into force on November 1, 1925, with a gazette notification from the Punjab government.

The Act created a Central Gurdwara Board. The Central Gurdwara Board was elected by the Sikhs and was to be the custodian of all important Sikh places of worship. During its first meeting, the Gurdwara Board passed a resolution, stating its designation to be shifted to Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee. The resolution was accepted by the government. When the new elections for the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee were held, the

Akali party won a majority and the newly elected Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee elected Baba Kharak Singh as the President and Master Tara Singh as the Vice President.

In 1953, the Gurdwara Act of 1925 was amended to reserve twenty of the 140 SGPC seats for Sikh scheduled cast members. The current committee is composed of 170 elected members, with 121 general members. Twenty seats are reserved for Sikh scheduled caste members and thirty seats are reserved for women. Neither women nor Sikh scheduled caste members are full representatives. From these reserved groups, there are two members elected from one constituency – essentially a double membership.

During Basakhi, on March 30, 1699 (while Baskahi is currently on April 13th every year, the Gregorian calendar skipped eleven days in 1752), at Anandpur Sahib, Sri Guru Gobind Singh Ji administered Khanda di Pahul (Amrit) to the five (the Panj Pyare, as referenced below) that form the nucleus of the Khalsa. Then, Guru, himself, took Amrit from those five Sikhs (Wahe Wahe Guru Gobind Singh Ape Gur Chela). This forms the nucleus of Khalsa.

Panj Pyare

(1) Bhai Daya Singh (1661-1708 CE)

Bhai Daya Singh is the first of the Panj Pyare to answer the call of Sri Guru Gobind Ji Singh and offer his head.

Birth Year and Place: 1661 in Lahore (present-day Pakistan)

Birth Name: Daya Ram

Family: Son of Suddha and Mai Dayali, of the Sobhi Khatri clan

Occupation: Shopkeeper

Initiation: 1699 at Anand Pur, at age 38

Death: 1708 at Nanded, martyred at age 47

(2) Bhai Dharam Singh (1699-1708 CE)

Bhai Dharam Singh is the second of the Panj Pyare to answer the call of Sri Guru Gobind Singh Ji.

Birth Year and Place: 1666 by River Ganges in Hastinapur, northeast of Meerut (present-day Delhi, India)

Birth Name: Dharam Das

Family: Son of Sant Ram and Mai Sabho, of the Jatt clan

Occupation: Farmer

Initiation: 1699 at Anand Pur, at age 33

Death: 1708 at Nanded, martyred at age 42

(3) Bhai Himmat Singh (1661-1704 CE)

Bhai Himmat Singh is the third of the Panj Pyare to answer the call of Sri Guru Gobind Singh Ji.

Birth Date and Place: January 18, 1661, in Jagannath Puri (present-day Orissa, India)

Birth Name: Himmat Rai

Family: Son of Gulzaree and Dhanoo, of the Jheear clan

Occupation: Water Carrier

Initiation: 1699 at Anand Pur , at age 38

Death Date and Place: December 22, 1704, at Chamkaur Sahib, martyred at age 44

(4) Bhai Muhkam Singh (1663 – 1704 CE)

Bhai Muhkam Singh is the fourth of the Panj Pyare to answer the call of Sri Guru Gobind Singh Ji.

Birth Date and Place: June 6, 1663, in Dwarka, northeast of Meerut (present-day Gujrat, India)

Birth Name: Muhkam Chand

Family: Son of Tirath Chand and Devi Bai, of the Chhimba clan

Occupation: Tailor

Initiation: 1699 at Anand Pur at age 36

Death Date and Place: December 22, 1704, at Chamkaur Sahib, martyred at age 44

(5) Bhai Sahib Singh (1662-1704 CE)

Bhai Sahib Singh is the fifth of the Panj Pyare to answer the call of Sri Guru Gobind Singh Ji.

Birth Date and Place: June 17, 1663, at Bidar (present-day Karnataka, India)

Birth Name: Sahib Chand

Family: Son of Bhai Guru Narayana and Ankamma Bai, of the Naece clan

Occupation: Barber

Initiation: 1699 at Anand Pur, at age 36

Death Date and Place: December 22, 1704 at Chamkaur Sahib, martyred at age 42

By creating the Khalsa and taking the Amrit from the five, himself, Sri Guru Gobind Singh Ji ended the centuries-old caste system (Bipran ki Reet, i.e., Brahmical practice based upon Manu's class system). However, in 1953, SGPC degenerated and adopted a cast-based reservation system. This is extremely obvious, as the current SGPC has lost its moral authority bestowed upon it by the Khalsa panth in 1925. The current SGPC follows Bipran ki Reet and the committee's appointed Jathedar has essentially accepted the caste system by accepting this job from this committee, despite the committee adopting practices against the teachings of Sri Guru Gobind Singh Ji. This has been further proved by the fact that any self-respecting Sikh will not consider being appointed to or employed by this committee with un-Sikh practices.

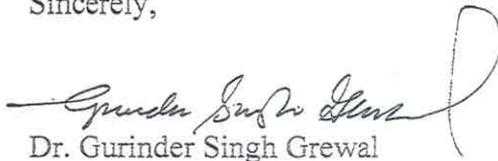
ਜਬ ਲਗ ਰਹੇ ਖਾਲਸਾ ਨਿਆਰਾ, ਤਬ ਲਗ ਤੇਜ ਦੀਓ ਮੈ ਸਾਰਾ ।
ਜਬ ਇਹ ਗਹੈ ਬਿਪਰਨ ਕੀ ਰੀਤਿ, ਮੈਂ ਨ ਕਰੋਂ ਇਨ ਕੀ ਪਰਤੀਤਿ ।

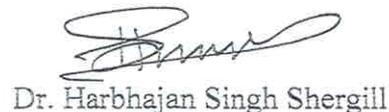
We appeal to you and all the SGPC members immediately to end the cast system in SGPC. Current members should seek forgiveness from the Khalsa panth and then a committee should be elected. By tradition, we can elect the leadership of SGPC from underprivileged Sikhs without any regard or consideration to cast. Failure to make the requested changes will be a failure for Sikhs all around the world. Meaning you will have no moral authority to represent the Sikh panth. Lack of change will lead to a lack of respect for you all and depict you all as new Brahmin simply in Sikh garb.

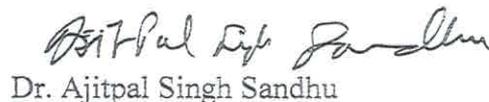
We also suggest that a new method of electing SGPC members by the Sikhs be adopted instead of continuing with government approved committee. We have extremely honorable retired Sikhs justices, who have served as High Court and/or Supreme Court justices in India. These justices can create a new draft of the Constitution of SGPC and it can be ratified by the Sikhs in general. We need to go back to collective leadership of Sikhs by Panj Pyare rather than giving a leadership role to a person or a family.

We hope you will sincerely consider our appeal and act in an urgent manner. Thank you for your consideration.

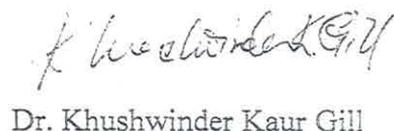
Sincerely,


Dr. Gurinder Singh Grewal


Dr. Harbhajan Singh Shergill


Dr. Ajitpal Singh Sandhu


S. Gurcharan Singh Dhillon


Dr. Khushwinder Kaur Gill