

CATASTROPHE IS COMING VIA SEHAJDHARI ROUTE

The SGPC in 1973 recorded that when the Sikh Gurdwara Act 1925 was enacted, there were some Sehajdhari Sikhs in some districts of Punjab but after partition of the country, this institution of Sehajdhari has virtually ceased to exist. It said Sehajdhari idea was being misused to enlist non-Sikhs as voters. It asked the Govt of India to include only keshadhari Sikhs as voters. Now, what new wisdom has dawned?



Avtar Singh Makkar, the SGPC President. Is he made of the stuff that can stand up to the Badals and the Advanis and tell them that panth comes before any of them, or anyone for that matter?

Gurcharanjit Singh Lamba

It is not a simple resolution or decision of the SGPC. It is a question about the future of the entire Panth and Panthic institutions.

This casts a big aspersion on the working of the SGPC. How one or two individuals can overturn the gurmata and can take the apex body, its general house and its executive body for a ride.

Even the entire Panth cannot change the requirements and requisitions of the five Kakars (including kesh) or four Kurahits.

SGPC or any of its officials is not competent to take a decision on the basic postulates of the Sikh panth.

But the sad reality is that it has happened.

29.09.2008 HC directs SGPC to answer, *Whether or not a person who cuts his hair and/or shaves his beard is a "Sehajdhari Sikh"*

22.11.2008 SGPC resolves to constitute a Committee of Scholars/Legal experts and Representative of the SGPC to give an opinion based upon historical, theological and philosophical perspective.

26.11.2008 Expert Panel meets and Chandigarh and recommends to SGPC that the 1938 resolution fixing qualification of a Sehajdhari be adopted

03.12.2008 SGPC Executive decides,

"A person cannot claim to be a Sehajdhari by trimming/cutting his/her hair, beard or eyebrows in

any manner"

04.12.2008 Expert Panel meets at Amritsar and confirms the SGPC Executive resolution of 03.12.2008

05.12.2008 SGPC files affidavit in the High Court saying, "Once a Sahajdhari becomes a Keshadhari Sikh, he under no circumstances by cutting/trimming his/her hair, beard, eye-brows in any manner can claim to be a Sahajdhari Sikh."

KESH. Every person keeping hair is not a Sikh but there cannot be a Sikh without kesh. When a Sikh shorns his hair he rather breaks his relation and linkage with Guru Nanak Dev ji.

Maharaja Dalip Singh was too young when he was taken under the tutelage of the Britishers. At Kolkata he was converted to Christianity. Still his turban and kesh were not removed. It was after one year that when his kesh were removed, E. Dalhousie Login remarked,

He had been long anxious to show that he was no longer a follower of Nanuk, he Sikh Prophet, by cutting off the long tress of hair which he, in common with all Sikhs, wore twisted up into a knot above the forehead and covered with the bright coloured-turban. (Lady Login's Recollections by E. Dalhousie Login)

'Sehajdhari Sikh' There is no mention of the term Sehajdhari Sikh in Guru Granth Sahib, Dasam Granth, Sikh Rahit Maryada, Delhi Sikh Gurdwara Act or even the acts governing Takhat Sri Hazur Sahib or Takhat Sri Patna Sahib. Sikh Gurdwara Act when introduced



in 1925 also had no mention of this term. In the year 1959 Section 2(10-A) was inserted in the Act vide Section 3(4) of the Punjab Act No. 1 of 1959. (Law of Religious Institutions by Dr. Kashmir Singh).

It is a known fact that in every election to the SGPC this term has been misused by corrupt and unscrupulous elements to infiltrate into the apex body.

In pre-partition days in certain areas of West Punjab there were some people who believed only in Guru Granth Sahib and Gurdwaras. At that time certain facilities were given to the Sikhs by the Government and Sehajdhari Sikhs were also entitled for those. SGPC was issuing the certificate of Sehajdhari. These Sehajdharis were following and observing all the ceremonies according to Sikh rites only. They felt pride in calling themselves Sehajdharis.

Bhai Kahn Singh in his magnum opus *Mahan Kosh* defines that Sehajdhari Sikhs are those who do not keep the *kachhahra* and *kirpan*. According to Bhai Kahn Singh the Sehajdharis too are not exempt from the *rahit* of keshas.

Khushwant Singh aptly notes the requirements of a Sikh,It proves that the sense of belonging to the Sikh community requires both the belief in the teachings of the *Adi Granth* and the observance of the *Khalsa* tradition initiated by *Guru Gobind Singh*; and that there is no such thing as a clean-shaven Sikh - he is simply a Hindu believing in Sikhism.

(A History of the Sikhs - Khushwant Singh p.305) Identity and entity of the Sikhs

is interdependent. Five *kakars* of a Sikh are inseparable part of his body. A section of the power wielding elements' hatred towards *Sikhi saroop* is blatantly un concealed

Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee in its meeting 12th May, 1938 had the occasion to define a Sehajdhari, which decided that a person claiming to be a Sehajdhari must fulfill five conditions, namely, (1) Should keep beard, (2) Should not use barber's razor, (3) Should make at least one of his children a Singh, (4) Should observe all rites in accordance with *gurnmat*, and (5) Should not consume tobacco.

Before partition these Sehajdharis used to call themselves as Sikhs but immediately after partition these very people branded Sikhs as Keshadhari Hindus. Hatred of this section finds its genesis in philosophy and writings of Swami Dayanand Saraswati, founder of Arya Samaj. Swami Dayanand was candid in ridiculing the *kakars* given by Guru Gobind Singh ji. Writing in *Satyarth Parkash* that as *vaam makars* have five *makars*, namely *meen*, *maithun*, *madira*, *mudra* and *maans* i.e. fish, sex, wine, dance and meat, Guru Gobind Singh introduced five *kakars*. He did not stop here and when further to offer unsolicited suggestion that these *kakars* were given by Guru Gobind Singh for that particular time and now there is no usefulness or purpose of keeping these now.

Sadly this was not a remark in isolation. On 25th June, 1963 while speaking at Kolkata Vinobha Bhave, the *bhooadan* leader had the audacity to

At the time of partition in 1947, a visionary Master Tara Singh had lamented: "Now that the Britishers are leaving, I am frightened." He said till now any Sikh, even worst type of a traitor, could not claim to be an angrez, but now it will take only two minutes for him to join the bandwagon of ruling class. How prophetic he was has been proved beyond doubt when such an affidavit is being submitted by SGPC

ridicule *kirpan*, saying what is the significance of this now.

On 11th November, 1963 while speaking at a *gurpurab* at Delhi, the then Union Health Minister Dr. Sushila Nayyar said had mocked at the very identity of the Sikhs and said the purpose for which Sikhism was created has been fulfilled, now what is the need of the Sikhs. Master Tara Singh strong rebuttal at that time had silenced her.

Mahatma Gandhi's oft referred remarks against Guru Gobind Singh ji that he was a misguided patriot left deep scars on the psyche of the Sikhs.

These remarks and observation may be innocuous or innocent but the subjects of this great nation least expect from its rulers is that their feelings and sensibilities are honoured.

Sardar Saran Singh, Editor of Sikh Review's remarks are pertinent and echo the feelings of the panth that our only demand is that we be allowed to live in this *saroop*.

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It is too well known that during the British period observance of the *Sikh Rahit* was mandatory. Giving reference of this SGPC on 22nd February, 1941 demanded from Punjab Government to ensure that this *rahit* is observed by the Sikhs in Punjab Police too.

But after partition everything

was reversed and trimming and discretion of the *keshas* became so copious that SGPC on 28th March, 1965 demanded from Government of India that trimming or shorning of keshas be strictly prohibited in the Army too. This demand of the SGPC was accepted by the Government of India and a notification to this effect was issued by the Army Headquarter in the year 1986.

It is a matter of fact that the tornado of Partition brought one big change. This was noted and recorded by SGPC in its General House meeting of 1973 which said that at the time of enactment of the 1925, there were some Sehajdhari Sikhs in some districts of Punjab who fulfilled the required qualifications laid down in the Sikh Gurdwara Act. However, after partition of the country this institution of Sehajdhari Sikhs has virtually ceased to exist. Of these Sehajdhari Sikhs some have become Singhs and some have fallen back to the fold of Hindu culture. It further noted that this route is now being misused to enlist non-Sikhs as voters for the Gurdwara elections. With this introduction, SGPC demanded from Government of India that since there are virtually no Sehajdharis exist the Sikh Gurdwara Act be amended to include only 'keshadhari Sikhs' as voters.

So much so that Khushwant Singh, the renowned scholar who himself does not follow *rahit*, writes truthfully about the importance of hair. His simply echoes the views of SGPC.

The absorption of the sahajdhari Sikhs into the Hindu fold adds weight to the argument that there is no such thing as a clean-shaven Sikh. At one time sahajdhari Sikhism was - as the meaning of the word signified, "those

who take time" -the half way house to the hirsute (keshadhari) form of Khalsa Sikhism. Now the process is reversed, and it has become a halfway house to Hinduism.

(A History of the Sikhs - Khushwant Singh p.305) The 1973 General House resolution of the SGPC was pursued vigorously by SGPC and ultimately Government of India concurring and accepting the demand of the SGPC disfranchised Sehajdharis by Notification No. S.O.1190(E) Dt. 8th October, 2003. It took thirty long years and efforts of the entire Panth which brought fruits and long awaited demand of the Panth was accepted.

At the time of enactment of the Delhi Sikh Gurdwara Act, SGPC itself contributed its mite in getting the definition of Sikh adapted by the Parliament which made it mandatory for a Sikh to be Keshadhari. While accepting the draft of All India Sikh Gurdwara Act, SGPC General House adopted the Delhi definition of a Sikh.

Playing its pivotal role in protecting the *kakars* world over, SGPC had been sending delegations all over the world and raising its voice vociferously. But it is intriguing as to what new facts have dawned on the SGPC now that they have filed an affidavit reversing their own stand and nullifying the achievement of disfranchising so called Sahajdharis.

Khushwant Singh in his book *A history of the Sikhs* had analysed and suggested the way to maintain the entity and identity.

.....the only chance of survival of the Sikhs as a separate community is to create a state in which they form a compact group, where the teaching of gurmukhi and the Sikh religion is compulsory, and where there is an atmosphere of respect for the traditions of their Khalsa forefathers.

This was the reason of the demand for the state of Punjabi Suba. But tragedy is that not only but the parameters analysed and suggested by Khushwant Singh have not been achieved even despite getting the state of Punjabi Suba, rather motion has been set to reverse the process of negating the gains achieved with great sacrifices of our forefathers.

Mansur-Al-Hallaj was ordered to be stoned to death. Every inhabitant of the town was asked to throw a stone at him. When stones were hitting Mansur, he was laughing. Shibli, one of his closest disciples got frightened and instead threw a rose at his Master. When the rose hit Mansur he started crying. Shibli ran to Mansur and asked he had simply threw a rose at him. Mansur told Shibli that the others were innocent and ignorant but you are not. Others' stones have hurt my body but your rose has hurt my heart.

SGPC's present stance of voluntarily agreeing to grant status of Sahajdhari Sikhs to those who continue to shave and trim is nothing but more than this proverbial act of Shibli. Shibli was under threat and compulsion. What is the compulsion of the SGPC is a matter of intrigue.

If at all the SGPC's latest stand with reference to Sikh Gurdwara Act that a person who continues to shave and trim is a Sahajdhari Sikh is not defeated, the future of the panth is anybody's guess.

(The author is editor of community journal Sant Sipahi. This article is special to the WSN.)

SGPC'S NEW PRESIDENT UNMASKED IN LATEST ELECTION



HIGH COURT ASKS SGPC WHETHER A PERSON CUTTING HIS HAIR OR SHAVING IS A SEHAJDHARI SIKH?

12.05.1938 - Resolution of SGPC says	No!
26.11.2008 - Expert Panel recommendation says	No!!
03.12.2008 - Executive Committee of SGPC says	No!!!
04.12.2008 - Expert Panel again says	No!!!!
But	
05.12.2008 - SGPC Affidavit says	YES