

# HOW THE SEQUENCE UNFOLDED

*The WSN has conclusive evidence that such clever maneuvering and drafting has not happened by any chance or mistake or legal goof up, and was the result of a sustained effort to corrupt the definition of the Sehajdhari Sikh.*

## Consider the sequence of events:

1. The issue came up when an SGPC run college refused admission to a girl saying she cut her hair and therefore cannot be considered a Sikh. Once someone took the plea of being a Sehajdhari and claimed that unshorn hair are not essential in Sikhism, and once the neo-Sehajdhari lobby also intervened, the High Court, vide its order dated 29.9.2008, directed the filing of an affidavit "based on a resolution passed by the S.G.P.C" asking whether or not a person who cuts his hair and/or shaves his beard is a 'Sehajdhari Sikh' if he performs ceremonies according to Sikh rites, does not use tobacco or Kuttha in any form, and can recite the 'mool mantra', with reference to Section 2(10-A) of the Sikh Gurdwara Act 1925.

2. The SGPC general house empowered the president to set up an expert panel and respond to the High Court directive on the basis of the expert panel's view.

3. SGPC President Avtar Singh Makkar set up the expert panel of seven members, headed by SGPC general secretary Sukhdev Singh Bhaur. These members were to formulate the definition of Sehajdhari Sikh and recommend it to the executive committee.

The members included, apart from Bhaur, Anurag Singh, Kiranjot Kaur, Gurcharanjit Singh Lamba, Jasbir Singh Sabar, Principal Suba Singh and SGPC secretary Dalmegh Singh.

4. The seven member panel met on November 26 at the Kalgidhar Niwas in Chandigarh. Before the discussion started, one of the members, Anurag Singh, circulated an unsigned two para note, in the form of a resolution which was of course ignored at that point but one of the sentences in the note should have been a dead giveaway of the intentions of at least this one member.

Even before the discussion could start, Anurag Singh had written that the note was a result of "a detailed discussion on the issue amongst members and other intellectuals present" and that "there is no statutory requirement as per the aforementioned definition in 2(10-A) for a Sehajdhari Sikh to keep unshorn hair."

5. Anyway, the November 26 meeting, which barely lasted ten minutes, decided to stick to the 1938 formulation of Sehajdhari as per which the day and the moment a non-Sikh decides to become a Sehajdhari, it shows an intention to embrace Sikhism and signifies that he has started on his way towards becoming a complete Sikh. From that day and that moment on, he cannot



Anurag Singh



Dalmegh Singh



Gurcharanjit Singh Lamba



J S Sabar



S S Bhaur



Prof Suba Singh



Kiranjot Kaur

cut his hair and should start observing all Sikh rites and continue on his Sehaj path to become a Sikh.

6. There is thus no time gap between someone becoming a Sehajdhari Sikh and then becoming a Keshadhari Sikh.

7. Anurag Singh blatantly, and Punjab Advocate General H S Mattewal behind the scenes, were pushing for the line that a Sehajdhari Sikh does not necessarily have to be Keshadhari Sikh. Anurag Singh's stance was that a Sehajdhari Sikh can take an indefinite time before becoming a Keshadhari Sikh, and only when he once becomes a Keshadhari Sikh, he should not cut his hair.

8. Interestingly, there was no written resolution passed by the November 26 meeting, it was verbally agreed that the 1938 formulation would be drafted by Dalmegh Singh as unanimously agreed, and would be sent to the SGPC executive committee which was to meet on December 3.

9. The drama happened when the SGPC executive committee was presented a strange formulation in complete denial of the unanimously agreed position and created confusion. It was drafted by Anurag Singh. It said Sehajdhari Sikh, once he becomes Keshadhari Sikh, cannot cut his hair. This implied that a

Sehajdhari may decide not to become a Keshadhari all his life and thus can keep on cutting his hair and be counted as a Sehajdhari Sikh.

10. When the media reported this on December 4 morning, many members of the seven member panel were furious and Makkar buckled under this pressure and convened an emergency meeting of the panel on December 4 itself at Amritsar in Guru Nanak Niwas at 2 pm. It was here that the real face of the entire conspiracy was unveiled. Members like Bibi Kiranjot Kaur, Prof Suba Singh, principal of Shaheed Sikh Missionary College, Dr Jasbir Singh Sabar, G.S.Lamba and even SGPC general secretary Sukhdev Singh Bhaur were themselves angry about how the recommendation of the expert panel was subverted.

11. After many verbal duels, a formulation was drafted. This was signed by all the members of the expert panel except Anurag Singh who refused to sign it because it made sure that a Sehajdhari Sikh can in no case be permitted to cut his hair on the grounds that he has so far not become a Keshadhari Sikh. With this, the cat had come out of the bag. The WSN is in possession of a copy of this December 4 resolution signed by all expert commit-

tee members except Anurag Singh.

12. It is not known why the expert committee members did not expose or take upon Anurag Singh and why they did not make him state his reasons for not signing the resolution despite being present? Also, why he was not asked his reasons for not signing particularly because the December 4 resolution of the expert committee was in consonance of the November 26 meeting's outcome of the same committee and he had participated in both?

13. On December 10, on the day of the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the SGPC counsel went ahead and submitted an affidavit that violated the rights of an entire community to even keep an eye on its gates. Filed by SGPC Secretary Harbeant Singh in response to the HC's directive in C.W.P. No. 13282 of 2008-12-10, the affidavit said that a Sehajdhari is prohibited from cutting his hair only after he becomes a Keshadhari Sikh. It also added that any Sikh born into a Sikh family cannot claim to be a Sehajdhari if he cuts his hair and he is to be considered an apostate (patit). While the SGPC affidavit indeed defines a 'patit' correctly, the HC had not asked for any such explanation. On the

## WHO SAID WHAT

**KIRANJOT KAUR:** What the SGPC has stated in the High Court is not what the experts' panel has agreed to. It was verbally agreed that the 1938 formulation would be drafted and shown to the panel before it is sent to the SGPC executive committee for approval. The draft was not shown to them, nor was it signed.

**G S LAMBA:** The affidavit does not reflect the view of the panel; in fact, it is an instance of religious, academic, legal and intellectual corruption. Those who allowed such an affidavit to be submitted should be held guilty of perjury and should be made accountable to the community.

**SUKHDEV SINGH BHOUR:** The affidavit is problematic. I did not submit the affidavit in the court, it was someone else.

**J S SABAR:** I find no contradiction in the experts' view and the affidavit.

**ANURAG SINGH:** What do these experts know? They know nothing...As for December 4 meeting, it was only called so that the experts can understand things, but obviously they have not understood anything.

single point which the HC had raised, the SGPC had messed up badly.

14. Further, the SGPC affidavit in the HC claimed that the SGPC Executive Committee considered the expert committee report in its meeting on December 3 and the affidavit was being filed after such a consideration.

15. The fact remains that the Executive Committee simply could not have considered any report of the expert committee on December 3 for the simple reason that no report of the expert committee was drafted or signed by any member. Also, the affidavit does not even talk about the December 4 meeting of the expert committee where the issue was discussed again, and where the written report was drafted and signed by every member except Anurag Singh.

16. Even more interestingly, this signed document was presented as the Resolution of the Executive Committee meeting of December 3. So, technically, it is this document that can be called the Resolution of the executive committee since it is signed by SGPC general secretary Bhaur and secretary Dalmegh Singh besides all other members of the expert panel except Anurag Singh. The affidavit submitted to the HC is clearly different from this formulation.

## Black episode for Sikh community as...

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But by all accounts, the Mattewal-Anurag Singh duo seems to be working at the behest of Sukhbir Singh Badal and elements from the RSS as well as the Rashtriya Sikh Sangat to whom they are much obliged.

The definition of Sehajdhari Sikh, drafted by Mattewal-Anurag Singh and submitted to the High Court, has completely sub-

verted the letter and spirit of recommendations of experts and has opened floodgates for non-Sikhs to claim themselves to be Sikhs.

Also, the SGPC affidavit now effectively renders a large number of Sikhs, born to Sikh parents, as patits. Perhaps a correct fact, but totally irrelevant to the purpose of the affidavit. All patits now have to be nec-

essarily kept out of any benefits accruing to anyone for being a Sikh — say, for example, for purpose of admission into Sikh minority educational institutions — while all non-Sikhs can simply declare themselves to be Sehajdhari who have still not decided to become Keshadhari, and thus have to be considered as Sehajdhari Sikhs.

The RSS lobby was long looking for ways

to penetrate into Sikhism but with this affidavit it has achieved the legal cover of a corrupted definition of Sehajdhari and now any number of non-Sikhs can simply memorize the Mool Mantra and declare themselves as Sehajdhari Sikhs. And all Sehajdhari may decide never to become Keshadhari and keep on cutting their hair and be counted within the fold of Sikhism.