CHAPTER-III

SOCIO-RELIGIOUS CONTRIBUTION

It is a well known fact that the SGPC, when constituted, was considered a supreme religious body of the Sikhs. Since its inception, it has been enjoying the same status and position among the Sikhs, not only of Punjab but by all those Sikhs who live in different part of the country as well as abroad. With its formation, its constitution came into being. Its objective became quite vivid that it was to work for the emancipation of the gurdwaras in particular and the welfare of the Sikh community in general. To uplift, awaken and to make the Sikhs conscious about their duties towards the Sikh Panth as well as the Sikh society/community, the SGPC had to work with commitment. Undoubtedly, this body from the time of its inception has remained busy in such works which could keep the identity of the Sikhs, their religion and ideology of Sikhism intact. The SGPC could give them direction to consolidate their beliefs and traditions, particularly in the region to which they belonged. Above all the SGPC has not only shown but taken keen interest in the various issues relating to the Sikhs in the Punjab and country itself as well as the Sikhs living abroad, in different countries. It has extended its help and played a constructive role for the Sikhs community abroad whenever the latter happened to be in need of it. Whether it was a question of the use or wearing of turban, keeping of hair and Kirpan, in various countries such as Canada, America, England and France, the SGPC extended required help to the Sikhs there. It pleaded and pressurized the Indian Government to side with the
demands of the Sikhs who had been living in the said countries for a pretty long time.

It will not be out of place if references are made to the various resolutions in connection with the socio-religious life of the Sikh community were put forth and passed in the various general meetings of the SGPC held from time to time (or annually) soon after it was constituted. In its general meeting of October 8, 1927, a proposal from Giani Sher Singh and an endorsement from Teja Singh Vakil were introduced in this connection. It was resolved that that meeting of the General Committee directed the Executive Council to publish an appeal and got it signed by prominent persons after visiting different areas, urging the Sangat not to prevent any Sikh from taking water from a well or from participating in Sangat and Pangat in gurdwaras and Diwans on the ground that his earlier caste was Mazbhi, Ramdasia, and others which were unjustly called low.\(^1\) The meeting authorized the President to get a similar Hukamnama issued by Sri Akal Takht Sahib at a suitable time.\(^2\) When regular work started after Ardas, the following resolutions were passed:

(1) About celebrating Jaito Martyrdom Day, as per resolution No 268 of the Executive Council dated 14.7.1928, the following resolution proposed by S Jaswant Singh and endorsed by Giani Kartar Singh was passed unanimously. This general meeting of the SGPC authorized the Executive Council to make necessary

---


arrangements for celebrating martyrdom day for the martyrs of Jaito on the day of Shahid Gurpurab at gurdwara Gangsar Jaito.3

(2) Agreements about gurdwaras of Section 7 (1) as per resolution No 271 dated 14.7.1928 of the Executive Council the following resolution was passed after being presented by S Jaswant Singh and seconded by Gian Kartar Singh: “Resolved, that after considering recommendations from the Executive Council the general committee is of the view that there should be very few legal cases about gurdwaras. Agreements should be reached at reasonable conditions wherever possible. Proper enquires should be made about gurdwara properties and agreements arrived at as per rules.”4 In fact, this kind of resolution was required to strengthen the religious character of the gurdwaras.

Applications had already been sent under section 7 to bring some gurdwaras under the Gurdwara Act. The Executive Committee should have made satisfactory arrangements about the gurdwaras for which applications had been filled under section 7 to bring them under Gurdwara Act. The gurdwaras it did not think very essential to bring under Part 3 of the Gurdwara Act. It should have arranged to file cases in consultation with the two representatives of the applicants, members of the SGPC constituency in which the gurdwara was located and other local persons. The executive Council had the authority to let some particular gurdwara remain under the control of a particular Sampardai (community) in special circumstances.5

---

3 Proceedings of General Meetings of the SGPC, 15.7.1928, Sri Amritsar.
4 Ibid.
The Executive Council was also authorized to reach a suitable agreement to maintain a particular gurdwara as a Sikh gurdwara, to ensure a proper utilization of its income, to prevent from becoming a personal property and to ensure good conduct of the Mahant and the propagation of Sri Guru Granth Sahib’s teachings.6

In one of the general meetings held on March 31, 1928 it was made public and vivid that the alterations and changes made in the holy Bani of Sri Guru Granth Sahib by Panch Khalsa Diwan by publishing books titled ‘Gurmukhi Course’ were a severe blow to the organization of Sikh religion and a threat to the purity of GurBani. This too could harm the identity of the Sikh community. Therefore, the SGPC advised that no one should buy or possess these Gurmukhi Courses published by Panch Khalsa Diwan. Panch Khalsa Diwan or anybody else having the books should send them to Sri Akal Takht for its approval. The Committee also requested the four Takhts not to perform the Ardas of Babu Teja Singh and any member of Panch Khalsa Diwan, unless they gave up their willful stand and sought the pardon of the Guru-Panth. To prevent such disputes about the printing of GurBani, arrangements should be made for the accurate printing of Sri Guru Granth Sahib by the Panth and its sale at so low prices that no book seller could compete, was suggested by the SGPC. The purpose of the advice given by the SGPC was to keep the pious character of Sri Guru Granth Sahib intact. This supreme body of the Sikh community wanted to popularize the teachings and ideology of the Sikh Gurus especially among the Sikhs of Punjab; other regions of the country and also even the Sikhs living abroad.7

---

6 Ibid., March 31, 1928.
7 Proceedings of the General Meeting of the SGPC held on 31.3. 1928,Library SGPC, Sri Amritsar.
In this very meeting of the General Committee of the SGPC, the Gurmat Rauh-Reet Committee resolved that since Panch Khalsa Diwan had violated the sanctity of the Bani of Sri Guru Granth Sahib through alterations and changes by printing the book titled ‘Gurmukhi Course’ and indulged in other anti-Gurmat activities by making changes in Gurmat Ardas, Amrit Maryada, etc., therefore (a) None should purchase or possess Gurmukh Courses (texts) published by Panch Khalsa Diwan; Panch Khalsa Diwan or anybody else having these books should send them to Sri Akal Takht Sahib; (b) Babu Teja Singh Bhasaur and Bibi Niranjan Kaur were expelled from the Panth and the Ardas of the other members of the Panch Khalsa Diwan at Gurdwaras and Takht Sahiban was stopped until they sought the Panth’s pardon; (c) To prevent such disputes about the printing of GurBani; arrangements should be made for the accurate printing of GurBani by the Panth and its sale at low price so that no book seller could compete. Of course, that paragraph appeared to be a repetition but that repetition was essential to establish that the SGPC was seriously concerned with the publication of the religious literature because the committee thought that if that kind of publication was allowed or was not checked, within short period the pious character of the religious literature of the Sikhs would lapse. This would also destroy the religious sanctity of the Sikh community.  

In the general meeting of the SGPC of October 28, 1928 it was resolved that the Kesdharies must declare that they were Amrit dharis and strictly abided by ‘Rehat-Nitnem’ and ‘Gur-Maryada’. It was further resolved that Sehajhdharis were supposed to declare that they

---

8 Proceedings of the General Meeting of the SGPC dated 28.10.1928, library SGPC, Sri Amritsar; also see S. Shamsher Singh Ashok, Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, Daa Panjah Saalaa Itihas, pp. 70.72.
considered the ten Gurus as their Satguru and their Sarup Sri Guru Granth Sahib as their ‘Isht’. They should not deem anyone else as their ‘Isht’. They should abstain from tobacco, katha and illicit relations with a woman. They abided by Nit-Nem and Gur-Maryada and they were not ‘patits’.\textsuperscript{9} After that, the question of breaking relation with gurdwara Dhubri Sahib (Assam) came up, because the said gurdwara was not functioning as per the maryada of Sikh religion. Therefore, the SGPC deputed S Arjan Shah Singh to make necessary arrangements and present a report within three months about the functioning of the said gurdwara. In case he expressed his inability, the Executive Council was directed to discuss the issue and take necessary action to put this gurdwara on the right track\textsuperscript{10} so that there should not be any harm to the Sikh maryada in general and Sikh religion in particular.

In another meeting of the SGPC resolution about the release of the Sikh Prisoners was unanimously passed on February 28, 1931. This resolution was adopted after being proposed by Giani Sher Singh and seconded by Master Sujan Singh. This general meeting of Rauh Reet Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhik Committee directed the Executive Council to form an effective and powerful Dharam Parchar Committee within a month in consultation with other general members and Panthak heads, in order to carry out Dharam Parchar vigorously in order to strengthen the Sikh Panth and also to spread the teachings of the Sikh Gurus among the masses of various communities. After a proposal from Babu Mal Singh it was resolved that Bhai Randhir Singh should also be included as a member in the Rauh Reet Sub-Committee. This would assist in strengthening the Sikh maryada as well as the working of the sub-committee would become more effective and fruitful. It is pertinent

\textsuperscript{9} Ibid., 28.10.1928.
\textsuperscript{10} Ibid., 28.2.1931.
to state that the Rauh Reet sub-committee and also the SGPC worked
with dedication for not only the spread of Sikh religion, but also the
emancipation and betterment of the Sikh community for at least for a
period of ten years.

The following resolution was adopted after being proposed by
Giani Sher Singh and seconded by Master Sujan Singh. A general
meeting of SGPC directed the Executive Council to form an effective
and powerful Dharam Parchar Committee within a month in
consultation with other general members and Panthik heads, in order to
carry out Dharam Parchar vigorously. After a proposal from Babu Mal
Singh it was resolved that Bhai Randhir Singh should also be included
as a member in the Rauh Reet Sub-Committee. The members of these
committees were required to do work of Dharam Parchar not only in the
Punjab but in other parts of India as well. In fact, it was desired by the
SGPC that these Dharam Parcharaks should even approach the
managements of gurdwaras abroad so that Sikhism in true term should
be taught to the Sikhs there.

Here, it is worth mentioning and also will not be out of place if
we go back to the days of the British rule in India. The Act of 1935, of
which the Communal Award was a part, meant the translation of the
statutory majority of the Muslims in the Punjab into a functional reality.
Naturally the Sikhs felt very much upset over the prospects of their
existence after the introduction of the Provincial Autonomy in the
Punjab. They were not satisfied with the provisions concerning the
protection of the minorities in the Act of 1935. They had bitter
experience in the form of communal riots. Such happenings, they felt,
would increase because of the superior position of the Muslims as
maintained in the said Act. Further it would make them to disregard the
minorities and create problems for them.\textsuperscript{11} As a minority the Sikhs and their leading institutions, like SGPC and Shiromani Akali Dal in particular, had many problems that were related to, not only to their representation in services, but also to their socio-religious position and status. Some of the problems were: the status of Gurmukhi language in the Punjab and also in the neighbouring regions Himachal and Delhi as well as the opening of Jhatka meat shops or the serving of Jhatka meat in the kitchens attached to the Government institutions. The Muslims never showed any real consideration to them so far as these issues were concerned. The new constitution had given an added boost to the position of the Muslims. This further increased the anxieties of the Sikh bodies in connection with the position and status of the Sikhs. All these factors were bound to affect the relations between the Sikhs and the then Government in the Punjab after the introduction of the new constitution.

Here it is worth mentioning that the elections of 1937, after the implementation of the Act of 1935, the Sikhs in general and the SGPC as well as the SAD in particular lost their prestige from socio-political point of view in the Punjab, because they felt quite perturbed over the success of the Khalsa National Party. As a result, this type of position led the SAD, in collaboration with the Congress especially and other political parties in general, to declare that they would observe April 1, 1937 as a “Protest Day” against the new constitution. A “Hartal Committee” was constituted by various opposition groups, in order to co-ordinate their activities with reference to the proposed Hartal. A meeting of the Hartal Committee was held at Lahore on March 8, 1937.

\textsuperscript{11} File No. 41-4/32, G.O.I., \textit{Home Political Department}; also see RNN, for the Month April 1932, NAI, New Delhi.
Besides Master Tara Singh, the representatives of the Shiromani Akali Dal, the Congress Socialists, the Kirtis, the Ittehad-i-Milat, the Students Union and the Punjab Youth League attended this very meeting keeping in mind the proposed Hartal.\textsuperscript{12} A resolution denouncing the new constitution was passed.\textsuperscript{13} Consequently this kind of collaboration and support of various political parties to the SAD once again enhanced the position and status of the Sikhs in general and their socio-political bodies in particular.

On April 1, 1937 the proposed Hartal was successfully observed all over the province.\textsuperscript{14} The whole thing was, however, marred by an incident at Kot Bhai Dhan Singh, near Rawalpindi. There the Muslims attacked a Sikh congregation in a gurdwara on the pretext that their evening service was being chanted in louder tones than usual. In fact, it was the expression of wrath of the Muslims who had not liked the observance of the Hartal in protest. The police had to resort to firing. six Sikhs were injured, out of whom one died later on.\textsuperscript{15} All this confirmed the apprehensions of the Sikhs as well as their leaders about their existence in the Punjab under the new setup. They realized that their social position, status, identity as well as their religion were not only unsafe, rather in danger. Therefore, it gave them another grievance against the then Government in the Punjab. The fears of the Sikhs vis-à-vis the Muslim domination under the new constitution were further

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item The Akali Patrika, 10.3.1937; The Tribune, March 10 and 11, 1937.
\item Ibid; also see RNN of the month of March, particularly after March 10, 1937.
\item Ibid., 2.4.1937. The Government Report, however, says that although the Congressmen had given ninety-five speeches in twenty-two districts of the Punjab, in the last week of March, about the coming Hartal, yet it remained a partial affair only P.G.R., Fortnight ending 15.4.1937, G.O.I., Home Department Political, File No. 18/4-37, NAI, New Delhi.
\item P.G.R., Fortnight ending 15.11.1937; The Tribune, November 15 and 16, 1937.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
whetted by the Sikandar-Jinnah Pact that was concluded on October 15, 1937. It made the Hindus and Sikhs very uneasy in respect with their social position and status in the society, in the province.

Probably no single issue produced so much tension and bad blood between the Government and the SGPC as the Shahid Ganj episode. It was a monument in memory of those men, women and children of the Sikh community who had laid down their lives in defense of their religion during the first half of the eighteenth century. The origin of Shahid Ganj was in the persecution and execution of the Sikhs during the governorships of Abdus Samad Khan and his son Zakrya Khan; moreover, in the martyrdom of Bhai Mani Singh and Tara Singh. Later on Ranjit Singh gave it the shape of a gurdwara. To maintain it he also granted the gurdwara a Jagir as well. As has already been stated in the previous chapter, the Gurdwara Act had taken over all the historical gurdwaras and placed them under the Shromani Gurdwara Parbandhik committee in 1925. Notification No. 892-G, dated April 28, 1926 issued by the Punjab Government proclaimed the Shahid Ganj, a scheduled gurdwara and gave it for management to the local Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, Lahore.

The local Parbandhak Committee then decided to get repair the Shahid Ganj gurdwara which was at that time in a dilapidated condition. The clearance began on May 30, 1935. The northern bazaar wall and the southern side wall were got built in the first three days, and a small door connecting the Samadhs (since demolished) and Gurdwara Shahid Ganj

17 Ibid., p. 41; Reports on Native Newspapers (hereafter RNN), for the month May, 1935 (particularly the last week of May).
Singhnian was erected on June 3, 1935. Most of the general clearance of the general compound was finished by the evening of June 7. The demolition of the dilapidated building in the precincts, including the Shahid Ganj Dharamsala, the so-called mosque, began on June 8. The work of demolition had been carried on for twenty days and all the buildings and the northern portion of the so-called mosque had been leveled with the ground without the least obstruction when all of a sudden, on Saturday, June 29, 1935, a large crowd of local Mohammedans, armed with sticks and hatchets, collected near the Shahid Ganj to attack the Sikhs in their temple and to take forcible possession of the building. This created a very complicated situation. The Sikhs, who had a legal right over the building, felt convinced that their action was correct. The Muslims, emboldened by their dominant position under the new constitution in the province, became indifferent to the actual position of the place; rather they tried to violate the law. For instance, 10,000 of them stormed the gurdwara to take forcible possession of it. They tried to terrorize the Sikhs and their leadership. By the end of November, 1937, 18 Sikhs had been killed. The Muslims even clashed with the police in which some police officers were also injured. It looked as though the Muslims wanted to intimidate the Sikhs because by such acts of violence they wanted to influence justice in their own favour. Sir Sikandar, as the Punjab

Ibid., p. 75 (On July 9, 1935 the Government conveyed to the Commissioners and the Deputy Commissioners that the legal position was that the Sikhs could not be obstructed even under Section 295 of the Indian Penal Code), Vide. Multan Gazette, 10.7.1935.  
21 The Zamindar (Urdu Daily, Lahore), 5.7.1935 (Hereafter referred to as The Zamindar).  
23 The Multan Gazette 7.7.1935; also see Lahore Gazette, 7.7.1935; Harjinder Singh Dilgeer, Shiromani Akali Dal, p. 179.
Premier, tried to take a sober view of the whole situation although other Muslim Unionist M.L.A.s inside the Legislative Assembly supported the Muslim sentiments. Perhaps in the face of the communal electorates then in operation they could not afford to talk in the secular strain. They even charged the Government with having connived with the Sikhs. The Government in turn stoutly denied the charge.\textsuperscript{24} Malik Barkat Ali introduced a bill in the Punjab Assembly, ‘called Muslim Mosques Protection Bill’, which set out to secure the mosque to the Muslims Sir Sikandar, however, warned his community that if this bill was passed it could retrospectively open up many socio-religious problems and issues that had since been settled.\textsuperscript{25} Moreover he said that in other provinces, where the Muslims were in minority, such bills could be passed by the ministries and Muslim monuments could be in jeopardy.\textsuperscript{26}

Some Muslim leaders like Shaukat Ali, Zafar Ali, Syed Habib and Maulana Ghazanvi wanted to have a permanent solution and settlement with the Sikhs.\textsuperscript{27} The reaction of the Sikh leaders in general and the SGPC in particular was that the issue of Shahid Ganj was not negotiable.\textsuperscript{28} They were sensitive about the preservation of their religious and cultural heritage and were not prepared to compromise at any cost. Therefore, things were really very complicated. In all this the bureaucracy tried to be neutral although they were charged with the leniency towards one side or the other, by both the camps. There is,

\textsuperscript{24} P.L.C.D., Vol. XXVII, No. 9, pp. 653-61; No. 10, pp. 733-37, No. 11, pp. 820-51, Lahore, 1935.
\textsuperscript{26} Ibid; also see Proceedings of the General Meeting of the SGPC dated October 20 and 29, 1935.
\textsuperscript{27} The Preet Lari (Gurmukhi Monthly, Lahore), August, 1935 and October, 1935 (Hereafter referred to as the Preet Lari), also The Tribune, 30.9.1935.
\textsuperscript{28} Proceeding of the General Meeting of the SGPC date 20.10.1935 and 29.10.1935, library SGPC, Sri Amritsar; The Tribune, 30.9.1935.
however, no doubt that at places the bureaucracy did bungle in this sensitive affair and made the things more difficult.

At one stage the Muslim leaders went to meet the SGPC leaders for discussion and settlement of the subject. During the course of talk, they asked the Sikhs to leave them alone for some time for consultation. It was then that Maulana Zafar Ali revealed to his friends that in the morning a Government Officer had assured him that the building would be handed over to the Muslims. But the Maulana apprehended that such an assurance had also been held out to the Sikhs. Even Lord Linlithgow, the Viceroy of India, admitted it to Mr. Zetland, the Secretary of State for India that the Government had not succeeded in creating an impression that its policy in the matter of Shahid Ganj was uninfluenced by any one. Court after court gave decision in favour of the Sikhs but the Muslims remained undaunted and unmoved. They resorted to intimidation of the Sikhs and even took to violence and at the same time went in appeal to a higher court. The highest court of appeal, i.e., the Privy Council also dismissed their appeal with costs on May 2, 1940.

They exhausted all the legal remedies and yet did not stop browbeating the Sikhs. Sir Sikandar even resorted to ‘dinner-diplomacy’. He invited leaders of both Communities to dinner at his residence and tried to defuse the situation. But such punctuations of sanity and goodwill always proved ephemeral and the problem remained

30 Zetland Papers, I.O.L./M2/31, letter dated 6.4.1938 from Lord Linlithgow, the Viceroy of India to the S.O.S. (Microfilms) NAI, New Delhi.
31 The Statement (English Daily, Delhi), 3.5.1940, also Punjab Government Report., (hereafter P.G.R.), Fortnight ending 15.5.1940, G.O.I., Home Department Political, File No. 18/5-40, NAI, New Delhi.
32 Files No. 14 and 61, Oral History Cell (hereafter OHC), Punjabi University, Patiala.
inflammable as before. The Sikhs suffered some losses including human lives but they retained their hold on Shahid Ganj. The outbreak of the Second World War in September, 1939 and the launching of Pakistan plan in March, 1940 altered the situation in the Punjab. The attention of both the parties was diverted from this issue. However, gradually the situation calmed down. Still there was no doubt that dispute produced a great deal of bad blood. Relations of the Sikhs with the Muslims further deteriorated considerably on this issue. With this the social position and status of the Sikhs were affected to some extent as they could not enjoy high place in the society where the Muslims were in majority. They realized that not only their properties, but also their religious institutions and even their lives were not secure rather in danger.

The Shahid Ganj issue gave birth to the Kirpan problem which was important for the Sikhs from religious point of view. When the Shahid Ganj agitation was going on the Government put a restriction on keeping of big Kirpans by the Sikhs.33 Restriction was imposed even on small Kirpans as well. For the Sikhs the sporting or keeping of Kirpan was a religious obligation; it was a very important symbol for their identity. In fact, at the time of the creation of Khalsa, the tenth Guru had made the use of Kirpan compulsory for the men of his new community. Obviously this constraint could not be tolerated by the Sikhs. The Muslims tried to get this right for their own community as well as to appease them the Punjab Government vide their Gazette notification dated September 20, 1935,34 exempted swords from Section 13 and 15 of the Indian Arms Act.35 No doubt, the Muslims were happy about it.

---

33 Harjinder Singh Dilgeer, Shiromani Akali Dal, p. 141.
34 The Tribune, January 3, 1936; The Fateh January 3, 1936.
But to the SGPC and the Sikhs it made no difference as the ban on big Kirpan was still there. They went on with their endeavors to get the ban lifted from the big Kirpan. In their joint meetings held on August 26, 1935 and again on December 15, 1935, the SGPC, duly supported by the SAD passed a resolution requesting the Government to remove restrictions on the use of big Kirpan.\textsuperscript{36} They also asserted that the restriction placed by the Government on the sporting of two small Kirpans by the Sikhs was also unjust.\textsuperscript{37} The SGPC described the ban on big Kirpan by the Government as interference in the religious life of the Sikhs.\textsuperscript{38} Mangal Singh appealed to his community to back and strengthen the SGPC at least on the religious issues. On December 13, 1935, a deputation of the Sikh leaders consisting of Sardar Sunder Singh Majithia, Sardar Ujjal Singh, Sardar Kartar Singh, Sardar Bishan Singh and Sardar Boota Singh met the Punjab Governor and, inter alia, requested him to remove the ban on the big Kirpan.\textsuperscript{39} The Governor, however, replied that he could not lift this ban as he would have to give such permission to other religions also.\textsuperscript{40} Another general meeting of the SGPC was held on October 29, 1935. Amar Singh Sher-e-Punjab observed emphatically that they did not want to break but what else could they do? On one side, Kirpans were being taken from the Sikhs; on the other hand, Muslims had daggers, axes and other sharp weapons with which they were murdering unarmed Sikhs day by day. It was a
time to make sacrifices. They could not live without Kirpans. S Chanan Singh and Arjan Singh Lahorewala said that Lahore district would be ahead of all other districts in making sacrifices if the Sikhs were not allowed to keep Kirpans because it was symbol of Sikh religion.

On December 30, 1935 the SGPC decided to launch a Morcha for Kirpan from January 1, 1936. Master Tara Singh, Gyani Sher Singh and Teja Singh were associated with this Morcha. On January 1, Sardar Boota Singh who had recently returned to the ranks of the Akali Dal, started the Morcha. A jatha l left Amrit sar under Master Tara Singh. The Morcha lasted till January 31, 1936 when the ban on big Kirpan lapsed automatically. Three hundred ninety-one Sikhs, including seventy-six women, courted arrest during this period. One thing, however, was clear that the Shahid Ganj crisis left the Sikhs very anxious and distrustful in so far as the Muslim attitude towards Kirpan was concerned. They mentioned this problem in their memorandum to the Sapru Committee. In their replies to the questionnaire of the Committee they made a special mention of the Kirpan and demanded an inalienable right in this respect. They emphasized: “No law shall be enacted and new executive order given to restrict in any manner or to any extent whatever, the manufacture, sale, the keeping and the wearing of the Kirpans by the Sikhs”. It, however, goes without saying that the

41 The Akali Patrika, 1.1.1936.
44 P.G.R., Fortnight ending 31.1.1936, G.O.I., Home Political, File No. 18/1-36. However, Harjinder Singh Dilgeer gives the number of arrests as 1709, Shiromani Akali Dal, p. 183.
45 Harnam Singh, Punjab the Home Land of the Sikhs, Lahore, 1945, p. 74. Earlier in 1937, Lal Chand Nevalrai had also suggested in the Legislative Assembly of India that this right should be universally allowed to the Sikhs irrespective of its size. Legislative Assembly Debates, dated 11.2.1937. V Session of the Legislative Assembly, Shimla, 1937, pp. 758-59.
Kirpan Morcha further embittered the relations between Government and the Sikhs, particularly the SGPC, on one side and between the Sikhs and the Muslims community on the other. The reason was obvious as the Sikhs had been constantly opposing the Muslims demand of separate Pakistan.

The Sikhs were required and desired by their religion to eat only Jhatka meat. In this case the animal was killed with one stroke of the sword.\(^{46}\) As against this the Muslims ate another type of meat called Halal prepared by killing the animal gradually. The Sikhs had a grievance that Jhatka meat was not allowed in any government institution whereas there were no restrictions on the use of Halal meat. This was regarded as an act of discrimination against the Sikhs. So they demanded that in all Government institutions Jhatka and Halal meat should be served at the same time and given equal treatment. Otherwise, too, in areas or localities where Muslims were concentrated, they would not allow the Sikhs to procure Jhatka. Naturally the endeavors of the Sikhs to have this injustice removed produced friction between the two communities.

Even in a city like Lahore, which was the seat of the Government and where the condition of law and order was expected to be better, the Muslims remained unrestrained and efforts of the Sikhs to gain this liberty only brought trouble for them. The atmosphere at once became tense and grave in August 1935 when a Sikh killed a goat by Jhatka method near the Shahi Mosque.\(^{47}\) A similar situation was also created at Lala Musa in the Gujrat district, where the Sikh tried to open a Jhatka shop.\(^{48}\) No doubt, at places like Rawalpindi where the Sikhs were

\(^{46}\) Sikh Rehat Maryada, SGPC Amritsar 1932.


resourceful they were able to get Common Committees set up from among the influential citizens of both the communities, and secure this right through such committees. But the overall situation remained the same. The Muslims were not prepared to concede them this right. What happened at Jandiala Sher Khan in Sheikhpura district would amply illustrate the point. Here a Sikh quietly killed a fowl by the Jhatka method in his own house. When the Muslims got wind of it they refused to allow him to draw water from the village well and ultimately turned him out of the village. Consequently, the Sikhs were very much agitated at that development. Kharak Singh and others held a Diwan in this village to assert their right. Things got so complicated that a riot occurred in this village. Master Tara Singh was greatly shocked and also astonished at this development. He accused Sir Sikandar Hyat that his speeches in the legislature had emboldened the Muslims and they had begun to molest the Sikhs for preparing Jhatka meat. The Government had no set policy in that respect.

The students of Government College, Pasrur, were conceded the right to Jhatka in the hostel kitchen after they had resorted to agitation. A Sikh police man posted in the Gurdaspur Police Lines could have Jhatka right that was not available to his counterpart in the Lyallpur Police Lines. The meeting of the SGPC learnt with deep regret that the superintendent of police, Lyallpur had taken back the order maintaining

49 The Fateh, 20.1.1937.
51 The Hindustan Times (English Daily, Delhi), 25.8.1937 (hereafter referred to as The Hindustan Times).
53 The Hindustan Times, 18.9.1937.
55 The Akali, 13.4.1941.
the previous practice of complete freedom for the use of the Jhatka meat in the Police lines which the Sikhs had been enjoying their for a long time. This committee desired to bring to the notice of higher Police authority that that was a direct intervention in the Sikh religion. The Sikhs were agitated over this indifference of the Government toward their problem. Even the Khalsa National Party, a partner in the Government of the province, passed a resolution in one of its general sessions and impressed upon the Government that in Government schools and other educational institutions, and cities, restrictions on Jhatka should have been withdrawn because, as per their religion, faith and even as per their social tenets the Sikhs could not take any other meat except Jhatka. So they felt emotionally hurt.

On December 1, 1938, Sardar Partap Singh introduced the Jhatka Meat Bill in the Punjab Legislature. It aimed at removing restrictions on the preparation and sale of Jhatka meat. Sir Sikandar very cleverly sidetracked the issue and said that since the question involved the allied questions of beef diet also, the bill could not be allowed to be introduced. Consequently the bill was rejected by eighty-four against forty-seven votes. At the All Sikh Parties Conference held at Roorka Kalan on 15-16 February, 1941, Jathedar Udham Singh Nagoke denounced the restriction on Jhatka which he realized was a big handicap to the socio-religious life of the Sikhs in the province. The problem, however, kept on lingering as the Government could not injure the religious sentiments of the Muslims by any relaxation in favour of

---

57 *The Khalsa Te Khalsa Advocate*, 18.8.1937; Proceedings of the General Meeting of the SGPC, October 9, 1938, SGPC library Sri Amritsar; also see Shamsher Singh Ashok, *Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhik Committee the Daa Panjah Salah Ithihas*, pp. 185-86.
the Sikhs. This right was not unambiguously conceded to the Sikhs even in the Sikandar-Baldev Pact, is acceptance was also made conditional.\textsuperscript{60} In their memorandum to the Sapru Committee the Sikh leadership mentioned it as one of their demands that Jhatka meat be treated on par with the Halal meat.\textsuperscript{61} It was, therefore, obvious that in the restriction on Jhatka the Sikhs suffered quite a substantial handicap and their religious feelings were hurt.

Another problem of the same nature, as that of Jhatka, was the handicap suffered by the Sikhs in the matter of taking out their religious processions. The Muslims created difficulties in their way. Some times by creating disturbances to obstruct and mar their processions and some times by arrogantly dictating to the Sikhs to follow a particular route. For instance, on April 16, 1936 a large crowd of Muslims collected to obstruct a sanctioned Sikh procession at Kharian in the district of Gujrat.\textsuperscript{62} All this resulted in great tension. However, the situation was saved with great difficulty. It was very easy for the Muslims to object to a Sikh procession by putting forth the view that the Sikh religious processions accompanied with music tended to mar the serenity of the Muslim mosques that might fall along the route of the processions. At Rawalpindi, Section 144 of the Criminal Procedure Code was imposed on account of such a demand put forth by the Muslims. On the occasion of Guru Nanak’s Birthday procession in 1936,\textsuperscript{63} clashes took place again in this town on January 18, 1937 when the Sikhs were taking out a

\textsuperscript{60} Mitra Register, 1942, Vol. I, p. 344.
\textsuperscript{61} Harnam Singh, Punjab the Home Land of the Sikhs, Lahore, 1945, p. 74.
\textsuperscript{62} P.G.R., Fortnight ending 30.4.1936, G.O.I., Home Department Political, File No. 18/4-36, NAI, New Delhi.
\textsuperscript{63} Ibid., Fortnight ending 30.11.1936, File No. 18/11-36, NAI, New Delhi; Proceedings of the General Meeting of the SGPC, November12, 1936, SGPC library Sri Amritsar; also see Shamsher Singh Ashok, Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhik Committee the Daa Panjah Salah Ithihas, pp. 170.
procession. In this very town again the Sikhs could not take out a procession on the eve of Jor Mela in connection with the martyrdom of the fifth Guru, as they were not given permission to follow the route they had so far adopted. They could not tolerate the indignity of a change in the route which the Muslims wanted to dictate them. On this very ground the Sikhs of Gujrat also could not take out a procession in connection with Guru Nanak’s birthday. More examples can be cited to illustrate the point further. It is, however, enough to say that this high-handedness of the Muslims constituted a great irritant for the Sikhs in general and SGPC as well as SAD in particular. So they remained dissatisfied with the thinking and policy of Government.

In the matter of religious holidays also the Sikhs were given very niggardly treatment by the Government. In 1939, in the Punjab, Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh’s birthdays were Government holidays. In that year, however, the Guru Nanak’s birthday fell on a Sunday and was omitted from the list of Punjab Government holidays, whereas the holidays of Christian, Hindu and Muslim festivals which fell on Sundays were declared as holidays on the next day, i.e., Monday. The indifference shown to the Sikhs in the matter of religious holidays may be seen from the fact that till 1941 when the independence of the country was only six years away, even the Jor Mela, the martyrdom day of the fifth Guru, and some very important festivals of the Sikhs, were not observed as holidays in the Punjab. In that year the Sri Guru Singh Sabha, Mughalpura (Lahore) appealed to the Punjab Education Department, and other heads of Government offices, to declare it a holiday in all the educational institutions and offices in the province. But

64 Ibid., Fortnight ending 31.1.1937, File No. 18/1-37, NAI, New Delhi.
65 Ibid., Fortnight ending 15.6.1937, File No. 18/6-37, NAI, New Delhi.
66 Ibid., Fortnight ending 30.11.1937, File No. 18/11-37, NAI, New Delhi.
67 The Khalsa Te Khalsa Advocate, 29.12.1938.
the appeal produced no result.\textsuperscript{68} These things, though small, were yet sensitive enough to produce dissatisfaction among the Sikhs and give them a feeling that their identity was in jeopardy. Their relations with the Government were bound to be strained under such circumstances.

Another issue that caused ripples in the relations between the Sikhs and the Government was the status of the Gurmukhi language in the Punjab. For the Sikhs this language was a symbol of their socio-religious and cultural identity. Refusal of the Punjab Government to grant the request of the Sikhs to treat this language on par with other Indian languages made them sullen and angry. Rather, the Government appeared to have started a systematic discrimination against this language in the province. \textit{Urdu} was adopted as a language for elementary education in the province.\textsuperscript{69} The champions of the Gurmukhi language had off and on tried to plead with Sir Shahabuddin, the Education Minister, in favour of this language, but in vain.\textsuperscript{70} The lovers of the \textit{Punjabi} (Gurmukhi) language held a conference at Rawalpindi on April 28-29, 1940. Resolutions were passed asking the Government (i) to be fair towards the \textit{Punjabi} language, (ii) to give grants for its promotion, (iii) to prefer it to other languages in the Punjab offices, (iv) to introduce it as an elective subject in the Boys’, and the Girls Schools and Colleges, and (v) to create \textit{Punjabi} sections in the college libraries as well.\textsuperscript{71} The conference, which otherwise was an impressive affair, proved a cry in wilderness because the Punjab Government ignored the \textit{Punjabi} language as a medium of instruction of education in the ‘Punjab

\textsuperscript{68} The Fateh, 29.5.1941.
\textsuperscript{69} The Mauji, 7.11.1938.
\textsuperscript{70} The Akali Patrika, 16.8.1936.
\textsuperscript{71} The Panj Darya (Gurmukhi Monthly, Lahore), May, 1940 (Hereafter referred to as the Panj Darya).
Primary Education Bill’ passed in 1941.\textsuperscript{72} This was quite in consonance with the policy of the Punjab Government they had followed so far.\textsuperscript{73} At the Roorka Kalan the Sikhs Conference held on February 15-16, 1941, the SGPC demanded an amendment in the Primary Education Bill and the Provision for the teaching of \textit{Punjabi} (Gurmukhi) in all the public schools where at least seven students desired it.\textsuperscript{74} The Shiromani Akali Dal and the Sikhs gave one month’s ultimatum to the Government at the termination of which they were to launch a Morcha.\textsuperscript{75} The Punjab Governor sent for Master Tara Singh an invitation in order to discuss the problem. Sir Sikandar was also present at this meeting. But nothing came out of this meeting.\textsuperscript{76} The matter kept on lingering and later on was taken up in the Sikandar-Baldev Singh Pact. It also found a mention in the memorandum submitted by the Sikhs to the Sapru Committee.\textsuperscript{77} Let it be particularly noted that the question of Gurumukhi/Punjabi was closely connected with the betterment of the Sikh community because the adoption, development and spread up Punjabi would give them further independence of identity and strengthen their position in the whole society of Punjab. Above all the religious literature would get boost and might become popular among the masses and even laymen in the Sikh community.

It was also resolved that no individual who did not accept Sri Guru Granth Sahib occupying Gur-Gaddi after the tenth Guru Sri Gobind Singh Ji as eternal Atal Guru, who compared any of the ten Gurus from Sri Guru Nanak Dev Ji to Guru Gobind Singh Ji to any

\textsuperscript{73} *The Akali Patrika*, 9.1.1941, Also *The Fateh*, 2/9.1.1941.
\textsuperscript{74} *The Akali*, 19.2.1941.
\textsuperscript{75} Linlithgow Collections, MSS, 125/90, Doc. No. 7, D.O. No. 323, dated 28.2.1941 from the Punjab Governor to the Viceroy (Microfilms, N.A.I.).
\textsuperscript{76} *Ibid.*, D.O. No. 330, dated 17.3.1941.
\textsuperscript{77} Harnam Singh, *Punjab the Home Land of the Sikhs*, Lahore, 1945, pp. 69-70.
other corporal being, who visualized any living being occupying Gur-Gaddi of Sri Guru Gobind Singh other then Sri Guru Granth Sahib; who added or subtracted some thing from GurBani or deliberately read GurBani in an altered form; who violated the sanctity of Bani by uttering the name of some living persons in the Ardas in place of ‘Ek Onkar Sri WaheGuru Ji ki Fateh’, who prayed to any other living corporal person or persons equating them with the ten Gurus; who proclaimed to exclude the holy Kirpan or deemed that excluded from the Rehat of the Khalsa and violated the Maryada of Amrit ;-was not a Sikh and he should not be a member of the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhik Committee, a devoted servant of the gurdwaras of the Khalsa and the Takht Sahib, or of any local gurdwara Committee nor should he be allowed to make Ardas in any gurdwara.78

There was a comprehensive debate on the resolution by S. Bachan Singh Gujranwala, Giani Kartar Singh Lyalpuri, Jathedar Mohan Singh and Jathedar Udham Singh after which it was forwarded to Religious Advisory Committee of the SGPC for further debate so that it could be presented and passed in some future meeting.

Resolution about widening the Parkarma of Sri Darbar Sahib was presented by S. Mohan Singh and supported by S. Basant Singh in a meeting of the SGPC. This meeting of SGPC expressed its deep appreciation for the scheme about widening and beautifying the Parkarma and the surroundings of Sri Darbar Sahib and appealed to the Sangat s to extend maximum assistance to Sri Darbar Sahib Committee in the Panthik work. After voting, the said resolution was passed with majority vote, with only 4 votes going against it.79

79 Ibid., The Sikh Dunya, April, 1943.
Another general meeting of the SGPC was held on November 28, 1943 at Sri Akal Takht Sahib, which supported the resolution in respect of the widening of the Parkarma of *Sri Darbar* Sahib.\(^{80}\) The meeting of the Shiromani Committee resolved that the Amrit of Khanda should be jointly dispensed to men and women. It meant that men and women equally shared the ‘*Bata*’. No Sikh organization had the right to dispense the Amrit of Khanda to men and that of Kirpan to women. On the contrary the person doing it was declared Tankaiyah by the Shiromani Committee and banned his Ardas and communication in Gurdwaras.\(^{81}\) S. Amar Singh Sher-e-Punjab presented a resolution about Ragnala in general meeting of the SGPC held on October 26, 1945.\(^{82}\) He informed the house that in 1936, the Dharmik Advisory Committee had decided that the Bhog of *Sri Guru Granth* Sahib’s Paath should be held at ‘Mundawani’ but none should dare exclude Ragnala from *Sri Guru Granth* Sahib. Some followed this decision while others did not since then the Bhog was held at ‘Mundawani’ at Sri Akal Takht Sahib, Sri Nankana Sahib and Sri Panja Sahib after their coming under Panthak control. When this issue was again raised by a member of the Dharmik Advisory Committee, a sub-committee was set up to present a report after ‘darshan’ of Holy Birs: Status Quo would be maintained about Ragnala until some decision was taken in the matter. After a proposal from Giani Kartar Singh which was endorsed by Jathedar Udham Singh, It was unanimously resolved that in the Panth, old traditions should be observed at different places without making any charge until the Dharmik Advisory Committee arrived at a decision about Ragnala.


\(^{81}\) *Ibid.*, 5.3.1944.

After India became free, the issue pertaining to the socio-economic position and status of the Sikhs remained there unsolved. Soon after independence on August 15, 1947, the SGPC extended all the required help to the Sikhs who had left their homes in the west Punjab and settled in different parts of the present province of Punjab. It is true that the SGPC extended required help in kind and cash to the refugees who started living in various towns of the Punjab. It gave financial assistance, food, cloths and other essential goods and equipments in sufficient quantity to enable the migrated families to settle down in life.

Due to the disruption caused by the partition of Punjab and the migration of Lakhs of families from one side to another, the general condition of the country had been very bad. Internal administration in every field had been rather poor naturally. SGPC too could not remain unaffected by these developments. Many big historical gurdwaras controlled by it then fell in Pakistan. Consequently, the total property of these gurdwaras worth over rupees 12 crores yielding an annual income of over rupees 25 Lakhs had been left behind.83 Apart from this loss of income and property, the SGPC was hard pressed to look after the refugees who had left behind their households and properties moveable and immovable. Since at that time it was the only Sikh organization actively participating in the welfare activities, every Sikh and non-Sikh expected to be at least temporarily relieved of the worries of food and shelter on coming under its supervision.84 Due to its involvement the problems of providing food and shelter to the refugees from West Punjab (Pakistan), the whole staff of the Shiromani Committee had been too busy for the past one and half year or so. It was to be able to

83 Proceeding of the General Meeting of the SGPC held on June 10, 1948, Library SGPC, Sri Amritsar.
84 Ibid.
pay full attention to the task of overseeing gurdwara management. So the first thing that the newly elected Committee did was to direct the staff responsible for supervision of gurdwara management to get free from all other activities and devote themselves whole heartedly to their main task. Gurdwara inspectors were allotted areas District wise and interim member was made in charge of the inspection Branch. Then, the inspectors were visiting their respective areas and supervising the management of gurdwaras. Efforts were being made to remove shortcomings wherever found. Moreover, enquiries were being conducted against many selfish and dishonest persons who took advantage of the unrest in the country and misused gurdwara funds. Cases had been filled after due enquiry and were still being filled to serve as an example for one and all propagation of religion.

Due to the loss of income from gurdwaras left behind in Pakistan and increase in expenditure caused by Langar, on the arrival of refugees from Pakistan and on construction, interior decoration, etc., the Committee’s funds for religious propagation had suffered a big fall. Despite that, the Committee’s existing Parchar missions at Hapur and Aligarh were continued and further propagation programmes were launched in Punjab. *Amrit* Prachar tours were arranged to Ferozepur, Ludhinana, Hoshiarpur and Jalandhar districts as well. This work was done simply to encourage the Sikhs to come up to the need of the humanity. During the year, 273 refugee boy and girl students were given rupees 22,000 as scholarships from the Committee s’ funds. Quilts and beddings worth rupees 6500 were sent for Kashmiri refugees; rupees 10,000 was set apart for providing ‘Kakaars’ and baptizing forcibly

\[85\] Ibid.
\[86\] Ibid.
\[87\] Ibid.
defied Singhis and Singhanis from Pakistan who sought captivation. Apart from that ‘Dastars’ and ‘Kachhehraas’ worth about rupees 2000 were distributed among the prisoners released from Pakistani Jails. The families of the Singhis' who had died fighting were given the help of rupees 5000/-.

Keeping in mind the interest of the Sikh community as well as Sikh religion, in one of the meeting of the SGPC, discussion started for the first time, about the creation of a separate Sikh-state of its own kind in the country for the protection of Sikh religion and culture. Therefore, with great enthusiasm, Giani Sher Singh presented the following resolution in this connection: “In view of the dangers faced by Sikh religion, this general meeting of SGPC declared that (a) For the protection of Sikh religion, it was essential that efforts should be made for the creation of such a state which covered maximum Sikh population and no single community, Sikh, Hindu or Musalim should enjoy majority in this state; (b) In the opinion of this meeting, creation of Pakistan was extremely harmful; (c) Due to the formation of this suba, some Muslim majority districts were taken away from Punjab, its Sikh majority should enjoy the same rights in the new state or the state of which they became a part, as were enjoyed by the Sikhs and Hindus in Sirhind State, and the Muslims in Central Provinces; and (d) Strict rules should be made for the religious protection of the various communities throughout the country.” After much discussion, the resolution was passed unanimously.

This general meeting of SGPC reiterated its resolution of November 30, 1940 concerning Sikh states and expressed deep pain at the bad treatment meted out to Sikhs especially in Kapurthala state. It

---

88 Ibid.
89 Ibid.
requested the Panth to put in bold efforts to maintain Sikh, conduct, the status and dignity of the Sikhs in the states. After a debate by S. Kartar Singh Diwana and S. Natha Singh, the resolution in this respect was unanimously passed. Thus, the Sikh religion as well as the dignity of the Sikh community could be safeguarded and strengthened.\footnote{Proceedings of the General Meeting of the SGPC held on November 30, 1940.} Another general meeting of the SGPC was held on February 27, 1943. When its regular proceedings started, the minutes of the previous meeting were approved. After that discussion started for the first time, about the creation of a separate Sikh-state of its own kind in the country for the protection of Sikh religion and culture, because the religious status and position of the Sikh community was quite dear to the leadership of the SGPC. In this very meeting, it reiterated its resolution of 30.11.1940 concerning Sikh state and expressed deep pain at the ugly and undesirable treatment meted out to the Sikhs especially in Kapurthala state. It requested the Panth to put in bold efforts to keep intact and then maintain dignity and Identity of the Sikhs in the Punjab states.\footnote{Ibid.} It was realized that it could be possible only if the conduct of the Sikhs were properly watched and they were encouraged to follow the principles once advocated by the Sikh Gurus. After a debate by S. Kartar Singh Diwana and S. Natha Singh, the resolution was unanimously passed.

In another meeting held on October 10, 1954, it was resolved that was, therefore, a matter of great pleasure that the SGPC had taken steps in this direction. Unity and cooperation of all the Sikh sects was a result of the special endeavors of the committee a living example of this unity was provided by the collective participation of the Udasis, Nirmalas, and
other Sikh sects, in the ‘Nagar Kirtan’ in the ‘Guru ki Nagri’ on the Gurpurb Sri Guru Ram Das’s taking Avtar.  

However, the committee had passed without any quarrel or dispute that the Gurdwara Act was solely to maintain religious ‘Maryada’ and ‘Rauh Reet’ in the gurdwaras. Those who had tried to use it for political purposes have had to face defeat. How evil it was to raise political slogans of ‘Zindabad’ ‘Murdabad’ in gurdwara premises. In the end, the efforts in this respect were appreciated and the concerned individuals, who had cooperated in this noble task, were congratulated on their courage and loyalty towards the Panth. S. Ishar Singh Majhail, President SGPC appreciated and endorsed these noble thoughts expressed by S. Udham Singh.  

It is pertinent to mention that the SGPC made it clear on October 16, 1955 that it never liked the Police intervention, even entry in the premises of the gurdwaras. It held that the Police intervention was against the Sikh Maryada and moreover it was direct interference in the religious activities of the gurdwaras. Therefore, in its general meeting of the SGPC, S. Umrao presented the resolution. The general meeting of SGPC held long deliberations over the police action of July 4, 1955 in the premises of Sri Darbar Sahib Amritsar and the situation arising from that, after deep thought, the committee was of the firm opinion that action was totally uncalled for and objectionable. It was carried out with the intention of creating obstacles in the management of Sri Darbar Sahib and SGPC through that objectionable and illegal interference and violation of the sanctity of Sri Darbar Sahib Amritsar and gurdwara Manji Sahib, the Government has delivered a severe and unbearable blow to the religious sentiments of the Sikhs. The meeting expressed it’s strong resentment against this objectionable and uncalled for action of  

\[92\]  
\[93\]

\[Ibid., 17.10.1954.\]

\[Ibid; also see the proceedings of the meeting 4.7.1955.\]
violating the sanctity of religious places and demanded from the Government to hold an enquiry into the unfortunate event by setting up an impartial commission and suitably punish persons found responsible for it.

S. Umrao Singh further said it was very surprising that despite admitting that the Police action was unjust; the Government was flatly refusing to hold an enquiry. It was the height of injustice and high handedness on the part of the Police as well as the State Government. S. Gursharn Singh said, “Supporting the resolution, I say that no Sikh belonging to any party can tolerate the disrespect shown to gurdwaras. We have made untold sacrifices for the respect of gurdwaras during the British rule. Does the Congress Government demand similar sacrifices from us”? The D.C. stated that Police had to hold Lathi charge and threw brickbats in self-defense. However, the Sikhs followed Guru Arjan Dev’s teachings and remained peaceful. Sikh pilgrims arriving on Masya were besieged and arrested. The Government should not have tried to repress the Qaum and desecrated gurdwaras. It would never be able to suppress their spirit with use of force. A wave of anger and resentment had run through the whole Qaum at that act of the Government resorting to Lathi charge and pelting brick bats did not behave a good Government. Supporting the resolution he strongly demanded that an enquiry should be conducted by setting up an enquiry commission consisting of responsible men, in order to identify guilty individuals. The D.C., DIG Ashwani Kumar and other guilty persons should be given severe punishments, it was demanded.\textsuperscript{94} S. Hardev Singh opined, “Those Government officials who have committed these

\textsuperscript{94} Proceedings of the General Meeting of the SGPC, held on 14 January, 1949, library SGPC, Sri Amritsar.
excesses should be severally penalized." The resolution was adopted unanimously. The activity of the SGPC clearly displayed that the protection of the independence of the Sikh gurdwaras and also the feelings of the Sikhs was the primary duty of this supreme body of the Sikhs.

Under the authority of SGPC, the Executive Council passed its first resolution on June 10, 1948 that henceforth, gurdwaras would be made fountain heads of Gursikhi; no factional propaganda would be carried on there. It was further emphasized that the gurdwaras would only deal with religious activities and all sorts of efforts should be made to keep away politics from its vicinity. Thereafter, S. Ishar Singh Majhail presented the following resolution that was passed: ‘This general meeting of SGPC Committee has heard with dismay and resentment that on the protest day against them on March 2, 1949, Master Tara Singh’s party, disregarding all religious sentiments, ancient traditions as well as dignity and sanctity of gurdwaras and forgetting all fear of Sri Guru Ram Dass and the master of Miri and Piri, Sri Guru Har Gobind Ji, breached the Maryada and discipline of gurdwaras, pelted brick bats at Sri Akal Takht Sahib and tore off the hinges of the door on the upper roof of Sri Harmandar Sahib and snatched the Kirpans of the sewadars of Sri Akal Takht Sahib. The meeting strongly condemned Giani Dhanwant Singh and S Jagjit Singh of ‘Khalsa Sewak’, members SGPC, for leading and directing the above-mentioned deplorable activities. The meeting applauded Singh Sahib Jathedar Mohan Singh who performed his duties in the face of danger and got beaten up while persuading these senseless rowdies to be reasonable.

---

95 Ibid.
96 Ibid., 10.6.1948.
97 Ibid., 31.1.1949.
Another significant issue was taken up by the SGPC members in one of its meetings held on January 14, 1949 related to the income of the Sikh gurdwaras. “The total income of all the gurdwaras for the coming year (1950) was estimated to be Rs 30 lakh. The total number of gurdwaras in the united Punjab before partition was 751 of which 179 gurdwaras had been left in Pakistan at the time of partition in 1947. With the application of Gurdwara Act on the Pepsu region, 176 more gurdwaras had been included in the list of the gurdwaras as schedule.” It would take more than a year’s time to take charge of these gurdwaras. The 34 gurdwaras of Pepsu which were managed by the Interim Gurdwara Board had then come under the control of the SGPC. The gurdwaras mentioned in Article 85 of the Sikh Gurdwara Act were under the direct management of SGPC but there were separate committee for the management of all other gurdwaras mentioned in articles 85 and 87 of the Sikh Gurdwara Act, 1925 was under the direct management of SGPC. Sri Panja Sahib, Sri Nankana Sahib and Sri Dehra Sahib had been left behind in Pakistan. With a recent amendment in the Gurdwara Act, Gurdwara Sri Dhamtan Sahib, Sri Fatehgarh i Patiala; Sri Nankana Sahib, Sangrur; Sri Ber Sahib, Sultanpur Lodhi; Gurdwara Sri Tegh Bahadur Sahib, Jind; and Sri Damdama Sahib had been included in the Gurdwaras of article 85 SGPC had not yet taken over the charge of Sri Damdama Sahib. The annual income of these ten gurdwaras of Article 85 was estimated to be Rs 19, 66, 600.98 It was resolved that the income of the gurdwaras would be utilized only by the SGPC but this money would be spent only on the religious, sociocultural and related festivals of the Sikh community only. The amount received in any form in the gurdwaras would be only meant for the

---

98 Ibid. 5.11.1959; also see S. Shamsher Singh Ashok, Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, Daa Panjha Saalaa Itihas, p. 296.
development of Sikh religion and emancipation of the Sikh community, particularly the women.

In one of the meetings of the SGPC held on November 5, 1959, S. Kartar Singh proposed and his proposal made was endorsed and finally passed in this meeting that the committee should make a declaration about the fifth Takht Damdama Sahib (Talwandi Sabo). After deep thought and deliberations over the matter, SGPC expressed the view that all discussions on the printing of Sri Guru Granth Sahib should be stopped immediately. Regarding the printing of Sri Guru Granth Sahib, the Damdam Sarup Bir completed by Sri Guru Gobind Singh ji and bestowed upon with Guruta (Guruship) should be made the basis for the printing. Thus it may be said that the SGPC was very serious in keeping the religious literature intact. The SGPC felt that that was its primary duty to upgrade the religious literature and also to see that literature reached the hands of the Sikhs, safely. Also its purpose was to develop religious institutions such as Gurdwaras and keep the Pawan Birs of Guru Granth Sahib as pious.\textsuperscript{99}

A sub-committee consisting of the President, SGPC, and its five gentlemen as well as five other gentlemen from the Sant Samaj was being appointed by the SGPC to do whatever was required in this connection. The said sub-committee of the SGPC decided that further printing of Sri Guru Granth Sahib should be done only as per the above committee’s decision. They requested all other printers of Birs to abide by the SGPC’s this decision. In this respect Prof. Satbir Singh presented a resolution that was passed unanimously.\textsuperscript{100}


\textsuperscript{100} Ibid.
With great agony, the general meeting of SGPC of October 18, 1965 expressed strong resentment against the heinous act of consigning the Holy Bir of Sri Guru Granth Sahib to fire at Doraha on March 23rd, 1965. Owing to the sheer negligence of duty shown by the Punjab Government in arresting and punishing the guilty persons in the earlier incidents of this kind, the occurrence of such incidents was increasing day by day. There was also news of the beard of a Singh named Avtar Singh of Village Mangpure, Thana Kalait Tehsil Narwana, District Sangrur being forcibly clipped by the Thanedar of Kalait on March 14, 1965. Despite repeated appeals made to the concerned officials there was no report of any enquiry being conducted to punish the guilty Thanedar. 101

Similarly, at Ludhiana, some misguided Arya Samajis had raised a dispute to hand over to Hindus the possession of Wadehrian Wali Sehaj Sikh Dharmashala. There were also reports about Police reaching and violating the Akhand Path of Sri Guru Granth Sahib. Dozens of such reports had been recorded by the SGPC which showed that in free India deliberate efforts were being made under a well thought out plan to weaken and disgrace Singhs. With great pain, SGPC wanted to bring to the Government’s notice that tragic state of affairs and to warn that to address to those incidents on war footing to win the trust of the Sikhs otherwise evil consequences were bound to follow. 102 Here, it is worth mentioning that the SGPC though registered resentment very firmly and aggressively but its method to get the needful done was non-violent and peaceful. It always remained amicable in its approach while dealing with the Government and its officials. It is particularly worth mentioning that the SGPC since its inception had been following the

policy of non violence and it never liked to indulge in violent activities at several times even when the situations were grim. In brief let it be stated that its main objective was to safeguard and protect the just character of the Sikh religion and Sikhism.

Fully endorsing the appeal issued by Sant Baba Fateh Singh to Sarbat Sikh Sangat, the meeting on March 31\(^{st}\), 1965 strongly urged that complete but peaceful strike should be observed. Resolutions should be passed and sent to the Government; their copies should be sent to the press and SGPC to atone for the disrespect shown to Sri Guru Granth Sahib, every Sikh should make an extra Path of Japuji Sahib in addition to the daily recitation.\(^{103}\) It was also resolved that SGPC should publish a white paper in this respect and send it to Government officials, Sikh representatives, the entire Sikh world, and other religious institutions. This meeting of SGPC strongly denounced the act of the Police officials in breaching the Akhand Path of Sri Guru Granth Sahib at Dharamshala Wadehrian, Ludhiana and entering there with their shoes on. It urged upon the Government to take appropriate and immediate action against the guilty Police officials whose nefarious acts had distressed the entire Sikh nation. The meeting strongly demanded that the Police should immediately hand over the possession of Dharamshala, Wadehrian to the former management.’

S. Gurnam Singh, S. Gultur Singh, S. Lachhman Singh Gill, S Kartar Singh Takkar. S, Darshan Singh Sultanwind, S. Surjan Singh Ludhiana, S. Mewa Singh, S. Santokh Singh Delhi, etc. gave clear-cut proofs of the excesses being committed against the Sikhs not only in Punjab but also in other regions of the country as well. S. Gurnam Singh’s resolution was therefore passed unanimously amidst loud

\(^{103}\) Ibid., March 31, 1965.
slogans. Hence, that became quite clear that the SGPC, being the supreme body of the Sikh community always felt concerned about the sanctity of the Sikh gurdwaras, Sikh religion and also its identity. In brief, has remained very sincere to the cause for which it was constituted. Even its Presidents, Vice Presidents, other members of the general council and also executive council, were very seriously protecting their faith, its institutions and also watching the interests of their community. It will not be out of place if some more facts about the mission of the SGPC are cited here in order to make and understand its objectives and activities more clearly. The income of the gurdwaras could be used only for their management and for other humane works such as charitable, religious and educational purposes.

The SGPC has explained the meaning of details word Sikh. It has also explained the duties of a true Sikhs towards Sikh religion and institutions. It has also made clear what the ‘Amrit dhari Sikh’ meant and included every individual who had taken Khande-Ka-Amrit or Khands Pahul prepared and administered according to the tenets of Sikh religion and rites at the hands of five pyaras or ‘beloved ones’. “Patit” meant a person who being a Keshadhari Sikh trimmed or shaved his beard or Keshas or who after taking Amrit committed any one or more of the four kurahits.105

SGPC, the supreme organization of the Sikhs was greatly perturbed over intended demolition of the Central Sikh gurdwara by the Singapora Government under the pretext of modernizing the urban habitat. The proposed action of the Singapore Government was highly unjust and condemnable, because it hurt the religious feelings of the

---

104 Ibid.
105 See Appendix No. I.
Sikhs. The SGPC, therefore, strongly urged the Government of India to apprise the Singapore Government of the Sikh sentiments, and impress on that Government through its diplomatic channel to desist from implementing this proposed demolition. The Sikhs of Singapore had made a significant contribution both in its defense and freedom struggle; indeed, it was unbecoming to reward them in that manner. The SGPC hoped that the Singapore Government would take cognizance of all those factors and would not implement its ill-advised and provocative decision of dismantling Sikh gurdwaras, which was bound to create world-wide repercussion among the Sikhs.\textsuperscript{106}

That General meeting of the SGPC which commanded the Supreme statutory positions as the controlling and co-ordinating organization of Sikh gurdwaras demanded that a High Powered Radio Station be set up at Amritsar for the exclusive purpose of broadcasting to the entire world the hymns of Sri Guru Granth Sahib and GurBani of the Sikh Gurus. The SGPC assured the Government of Indian that that station would not be used for any political propaganda except the relay of Shabad Kirtan, and the station might be manned by the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting, Government of India. The Cost of proposed project involving considerable foreign exchange and the expenditure on building etc. would be financed by the Indian emigrants in U.K. as voluntary contribution, and it would not be a burden on the Government of India. The SGPC, therefore, requested the Government of Indian to accord its approval to that project at the earliest.\textsuperscript{107}

\textsuperscript{106} *Gurdwara Gazettee*, April 1978, pp. 7-19; proceedings of the general meeting of the SGPC held on March 12, 1978.

\textsuperscript{107} *Gurdwara Gazettee*, April 1978, pp. 7-19; proceedings of the general meeting of the SGPC held on March 12, 1978.
The SGPC also demanded that restrictions imposed by the previous Government of Smt. Indra Gandhi, on the entry into India of certain Sikhs, be removed forthwith, and they might be allowed to visit India without any restriction or condition, what so ever. The General Body of SGPC urged the Government of India to halt with immediate effect the grossly atrocious, unwarranted and humiliating steps being taken by the Enforcement authorities in Punjab, particularly in the Hoshiarpur, Jullundur and Kapurthala Districts. Such steps were taken under the provisions were relating to remittances from abroad with retrospective effect that amended during the discredited Emergency regime of Mrs. Indra Gandhi. Respective and arbitrary measures had been let loose by the Enforcement Staff of the Ministry of Finance, Government of India in the province of Punjab in the name of alleged violations of the Reserve Bank of India rules changed into authoritarian style by the undemocratic rulers now discarded by the masses.108

The persons of Punjab origin, settled in far off land of the world, had been enriching their mother-land and depended on their families left behind with remittances of their legally-earned wealth over the past few decades and the same had been well-utilized for development works, like education, house-building, agriculture, industry and business for the ultimate and collective progress of the State and the country instead of appreciating and rewarding them for their spirit of self-reliance and sturdy progressivism for the economic improvement of their relations as well as their motherland. Their relations were being harassed, implicated in false and flimsy cases and humiliated through inquiries, arrests and trials, away from their normal places of residence. The SGPC unanimously resolved to demand of the Government of India, the

108 Ibid.
notorious amendment of the Reserve Bank Rules in this connection should be immediately scrapped by the Government of India and the policy of which-hunt of Punjabis, who constituted the bulk of emigrants from India, should be abandoned forthwith by the Enforcement Staff.\textsuperscript{109}

The SGPC placed on record its grave concern for non-inclusion of Sikh representatives in the Minority Commission. This action of the Government added to their long list of grievances for the discriminatory treatment against the Sikhs. It is relevant to add that the Sikhs were a separate community having their own religion, philosophy, customs and way of living which happen to be basically different of Hindus. They, therefore, refused to be treated as such. Under the circumstances the SGPC earnestly demanded that two Sikhs be included in the Minority-Commission on the recommendation of the SGPC. The meeting of the General body of the SGPC unanimously resolved to request the Government of India to take immediate steps for the conferment of the rights of Dual Citizenship upon the emigrants of Indian origin then settled abroad to do so in future. The Governments of Italy and Pakistan had set international precedents for according dual citizenship. This is a worthy example to be followed by our Government. These feelings of the SGPC would not only help Indian swell her foreign exchange reserved tremendously but would also go a long way in stepping up investments in industry, business and other economic development of the country; since the curbs and restrictions on their hard-earned money would evaporate; once the status of Dual Citizenship was made available to the emigrants and settlers abroad of Indian origin.\textsuperscript{110}

\textsuperscript{109} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{110} Ibid.
Another meeting of the SGPC resolved to express its grave concern over the ban imposed upon the entry of the Sikhs into Saudi Arabia by its Government. All the facilities available to the other nationals had been denied to the Sikh residents of the country. As a result of that discriminatory action of the Government the Sikhs had started defacing their Sikh identity either to get entry in Saudi Arabia or to keep their stay in that country. In this meeting of August, the representative body of the Sikhs (SGPC) strongly condemned the biased attitude of the Government of India’s efforts to exercise its full influence through diplomatic channels to persuade the Government of Saudi Arabia to lift the ban on the entry of the Sikhs into that country. Lastly let it be noticed that the SGPC always remained vigilant and whenever there seemed any danger to the identity of the Sikhs, whether within the country and outside, the SGPC at once registered its protest and resistance. Above all this body succeeded in all of its activities related to religion of the Sikh community.\textsuperscript{111}

If any Sikh, may be of any stature, status and position, has gone against the principles and ideology of Sikhism, without any discrimination he has been taken to task. Such men (without caring for their status) have been summoned to the Akal Takht from time to time and asked to apologise; where as some proclaimed tankhahiya and as religious atonement have been asked to clean the utensils in the common kitchen; or to serve in the common kitchen; or to clean the pair of shoes of the visitors to the Golden Temple; SGPC gave full support to implementation of the edicts of the Akal Takht. Defiance of edicts of Akal Takht has led to the excommunication from Sikh Panth. This way SGPC could keep intact the socio-economic position, religious identity of the Sikhs and also maintain the prestige of Sri Akal Takhat.

\textsuperscript{111} \textit{Ibid.}