Chapter V

SOME OTHER CONSTRUCTIVE WORKS

Undoubtedly, Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhik Committee (hereafter SGPC) was a supreme religious body (institution). Indeed, it was performing mainly religious duties and looking after the management of the Sikh gurdwaras for which it was actually formed for this very purpose. However, it did participate in the political activities of the province and also country which has already been discussed analytically in the second chapter. The SGPC did perform some other duties and these have been considered its constructive works. The present chapter deals with such works like the establishment of historical memorial and museums, socio-religious organizations and political conferences, economic issues and assistance given to various forums of the Sikhs, its contribution in the development and spread of Punjabi language and literature, its help to the Government particularly during the Indo-China (1962) and Indo-Pak wars (1965 and 1971), etc. These issues have been explored and examined critically in order to understand its character. This chapter also throws ample light on its various achievements and contribution made by the SGPC in various walks of life of the Sikh community. Now, let us cite various resolutions passed unanimously in its different general meetings since the day of its inception till 1984. The SGPC soon after its formation made it clear to the Sikh community that the Sikhs of the Gurus living all over the world, were expected to provide food to the hungry, rest to the tired ones, treatment to those who were ailing, direction to those gone astray, courage to the dispirited ones and freedom from worry to the anxious soul so that the
motto: ‘Degh Tegh Fateh’ of ‘Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh’ Panth could be realized. Also the bewildered humanity could find roots in truth, contentment, compassion, religion and natural repose.\(^1\) The SGPC wanted to see the Sikh community quite responsible, mature and also answerable to the Sikh Panth and the Gurus’ ideology.\(^2\) It will be desirable if its various achievements and contributions in different walks of life are discussed in detail under separate heads:

An important resolution was passed in its meeting of October 9, 1938 to remove fictitious titles of Gur Shiromani. With the chair’s permission, S. Avtar Singh Barrister presented the resolution which was passed unanimously. In it, it was resolved that Punjab Government be asked to prosecute the writer of a Gutka named ‘Bhagti Sarovar’ Swami Jyotirmayanand, Tirath Yogiray (Kashi) published by Diwan Chand Ganga Ram Book Sellers, Lohari Gate, Lahore for insulting the holy Shiromani of Satgurus by improperly using words like ‘True Japuji’, ‘True Rahras’, ‘True Ardas’, ‘True Sukhmani’ etc. The publication of the Gutka sent a wave of unrest and resentment among the Sikhs that might threaten public peace.\(^3\) A general meeting of the SGPC was held on February 12, 1940. When a proposal concerning the Sarovar of Takht Kesgarh (Anandpur), came up, it was unanimously approved that permission was granted to make a Sarovar

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\(^1\) Proceedings of the General Meeting of the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhik Committee (hereafter SGPC), dated March 10, 1925, Reference Section, Library SGPC, Sri Amritsar; also see for further details S. Shamsher Singh Ashok, Panjah Saala Ithihas (1926 to 1976), Sri Amritsar 2003; also see S.S. Gandhi, Perspectives on Sikh Gurdwaras Legislations, New Delhi, 1993,

\(^2\) Proceedings of the General Meeting of the SGPC, dated March 10, 1925, Reference Section, Library SGPC, Sri Amritsar; The Tribune, Lahore March 11, 1925; the Manji, March 14, 1925.

\(^3\) Proceedings of the General Meeting of the SGPC, dated October 9, 1938, Reference Section, Library SGPC, Sri Amritsar.
covering about twenty Kanals of the Takht Sahib’s land adjacent to Bunga of Kathagarhian Sardar’ in the north-west corner of the gurdwara of the Takht. Sant Hari Singh Kaharpuri had undertaken the responsibility to conduct the entire Kar Sewa for that work.⁴

At this time the Sikhs, particularly their religious minded leaders did not approve of the activities of Namdhari Darbar. Under the circumstances a meeting of the SGPC was convened on October 26, 1941. In it after an affectionate advice from the leaders of SGPC Namdhari Darbar withdrew Patras. The Darbar also expressed regrets at the pain caused to their brothers. But some gentlemen were still not satisfied. Therefore, the Namdhari Darbar declared once again that they considered it their duty to show to Sri Guru Granth Sahib the reverence it deserved. They promised they would respect the sentiments of the Panth and not permit any such thing to happen again.⁵ Thereafter, Giani Kartar Singh read out the following resolution which was endorsed by S. Ajit Singh:

This meeting of SGPC was of the view that the Panth of separate ‘Patras’ from Sri Guru Granth Sahib was against the accepted Maryada of Panth and doing so amounted to showing disrespect to Sri Guru Granth Sahib. Therefore, the meeting fully endorsed the action taken by the Shiromani Committee to stop this practice. After the declaration made by the Executive Council of Namdhari Darbar and S. Atma Singh’s statement in

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⁵ Proceedings of the General Meeting of the SGPC, dated October 26, 1941, Reference Section, Library SGPC, Sri Amritsar; RNN, for the month October November 1941, pp.551-60.
this meeting, it felt no need for any further action in the matter.\textsuperscript{6} The resolution was accepted with majority vote. This very meeting drew the attention of the responsible officials of the Police department to the fact that taking off a Sikhs’ turban-as was being done in Punjab jails-was an insult to the Sikhs and their religion. The SGPC, therefore, demanded that that practice prevalent in lockups should be immediately withdrawn and the Sikhs recruited in police should be made to observe Sikh rules of conduct (Sikh Rehat Behat) as was done in the case of Sikhs recruited in army. They would then prove to be better policemen and there would be no religious objection against them. Another significant work done by the SGPC was to start a religious monthly magazine. It was decided by a resolution that was introduced in its meeting of March 7, 1942. It read, “This general meeting of SGPC resolves that it should publish a religious monthly magazine which should exclusively contain articles about Sikh principles and religious Maryada. It should be beautiful and low-priced and contain articles of great philosophers and thinkers”.\textsuperscript{7} In the meeting of November 28, 1943, it was brought to the notice of the members present that the Maharaja of Patiala, who was a Sikh yet, was retaining the office of the President of Sanatan Dharam Sabha; that was against the principles and detrimental to Sikh religion. He was asked to give up that office immediately.\textsuperscript{8} In the opinion of this very general meeting of the SGPC the last four chapters of the Satyarth Parkash contained caustic, false, hurtful, baseless attacks on Sikh gurus and

\textsuperscript{6} \textit{Ibid.}

\textsuperscript{7} Proceedings of the General Meeting of the SGPC, dated March 7, 1942, Reference Section, Library SGPC, Sri Amritsar; \textit{The Tribune} March 9, 1942; for further details also see, Harjinder Singh Dilgeer, \textit{Shiromani Akali Dal}, Punjabi Book Company, Jullundur, undated.

\textsuperscript{8} Proceedings of the General Meeting of the SGPC, dated November 28, 1940, Reference Section, Library SGPC, Sri Amritsar; \textit{The Khalsa}, Lahore December 3, 1940.
their religion. This meeting appealed to their Arya Samaji brothers to think over the matter calmly and not to publish these four chapters in future because that had, encouraged communal disputes in the Punjab in particular and country in general.\textsuperscript{9} It would be a great service to the Sikh community in particular and the country in general. This general meeting of SGPC fully agreed with the views expressed by S. Kapur Singh through the general meeting’s resolution No. 22 on November 6, 1942 that had been sent to Dharmik Advisory Committee which subsequently endorsed it through its resolution no. 6 on November 2, 1943, that no contrived or foreign rhymes, illustrations or interpretations were added to the Gur Shiromani.\textsuperscript{10} It was also made clear that: चूँकि अच्छी तरह धार्मिक पत्रकाल साहित्य को भली भाषाय\textsuperscript{11} Jathedar Mohan Singh spoke about printing Gur Shiromani and observed, “The Muslims have presented a Bill in the Punjab Assembly that no non-Muslim should be allowed to print or sale the Holy Quran. There is no such thought in the minds of the Sikhs but I feel that full attention is not being paid to the correct printing and the sanctity of Sri Guru Granth Sahib. We want that this task should be entrusted to the SGPC not because we want to draw out profits but because unfair profits are being made at present. Under strict supervision, the SGPC will get the printing done with great care and supply it to the Sangats at cost price”\textsuperscript{12}.

So in this connection a resolution was passed unanimously. This meeting of the SGPC also resolved that the ‘Panj Piaras’ and Parcharaks for

\textsuperscript{9} Ibid; The Mauji, November 30, 1940; The Punjabi Punch, Amritsar, November 30, 1940.
\textsuperscript{10} Proceedings of the General Meeting of the SGPC, dated November 6, 1942 and November 2, 1943, Reference Section, Library SGPC, Sri Amritsar.
\textsuperscript{11} Ibid; The Civil and Military Gazette, Lahore, November 1942 and November 1943.
\textsuperscript{12} Ibid.
Amrit Parchar among Mazhabi and Ravidasia Sikhs should be selected out of Mazhabi and Ravidasias Sikhs themselves because there was a great need of Amrit Parchar elsewhere also.13 Similarly, resolution about recruitment of Rai Sikhs was passed unanimously; through it the SGPC wished to bring it to the notice of the Punjab Government that Rai Sikhs, Mazhabi Sikhs etc. like other Sikhs should also be recruited in the police department14

Next general meeting of the SGPC took place on March 5, 1944. S. Harnam Singh presented a resolution saying that Bhai Randhir Singh had urged the meat eating Amritdharis to take Amrit afresh because taking of meet was contrary to Gurmat. He also suggested that a proper action should, therefore, be taken against him. Giani Sher Singh suggested that suitable decision should be taken only after enquiring of him why he did so.15 The resolution was therefore forwarded to the Executive Council of the SGPC. Discussion on some other issues took place. For instance, the issue of getting four ‘Samulas’ of Satyarth Parkash confiscated in view of the communal hatred provoked by them, came up. After that discussion went on regarding issues like removing the misgivings in the public mind about gurdwara management and its Parcharaks, expanding the work of the publicity department, increasing the issuance of circulars through Gurdwara Gazette, encouraging primary education in the Sikh Panth through Gurdwara Parchar, appointing competent engineers for consultation on about gurdwara buildings, setting up a Dharmik Advisory Committee for Dharam Parchar, and making plans for the publication of religious literature.16 After that a

13 Ibid.
14 Ibid.
15 Ibid; The Hindustan Times, March 7, 1944; The Sant Sipahi, Amritsar, March 6, 1944.
16 Ibid; The Khalsa, Lahore, see second half of the Month October 1944.
resolution was passed for the Parchar of GurSikhi among the ‘untouchable’
classes. In its general meeting of March 10, 1945, it was made clear to the
Sikh Sangat that the Parchar of Sikhi should be carried out with in the
Punjab and also in other regions of the country. It was also decided that
efforts be made to raise the numbers of Sikhs to 1 crore in the Census of
1951. Helping 5 lakh Sikhs to learn Japji Sahib and the names of the ten
Gurus; Serving Amrit (Baptising) to 5 lakh new Sikhs; Making at least 5
lakh Sikhs to give up drinking; Persuading 5 lakh new persons to have ‘kes’
(sport long hair); Launching a vigorous campaign against cigarettes,
Tobacco. Removing the use of ‘Katha’ among Sikhs; reviving the old
practice of Katha in village gurdwaras; Setting up a broadcasting station at
Amritsar; Starting training programmes to produce good Parcharaks,
Granthis, Ragis and Dhadis; Trying to uplift backward classes; Starting a
system of honorary Ragis were some of the other important works which
were to be carried out by the Sikh Samaj and also some other bodies which
functioned under the guidance of the SGPC.

In honour of the country’s freedom and the bright future of Guru
Panth, Jathedar Sri Akal Takht Sahib issued the following Hukamnama on
the Deepmala of November 1948: “A message from Sri Akal Takht Sahib to
the Sikh Sangats coming from far and wide to the annual gathering at
Amritsar Deepmala was that India has become free from foreign rule and the
Sangats have made great sacrifices for this freedom. We have always to keep
the Panth in ascendancy (चक्करीचक्स) in free India and take the country to the
heights of progress. Therefore, the Sangats should pay special attention to

17 Ibid.
18 Proceedings of the General Meeting of the SGPC, dated March 10, 1945,
Reference Section, Library SGPC, Sri Amritsar
the following things in the coming year: (i) holding Ardas to the Akal Purkh for the freedom of the gurdwaras and our innocent Indian sisters left back in Pakistan; (ii) keeping and making efforts for the rehabilitation of our brothers who have left behind everything in Pakistan; (iii) receiving military training for the defense of the country; (iv) giving up drinking.”

Another important work done by the SGPC was sending the pilgrimage Jatha to Sri Nankana Sahib. This Jatha constituted only 75 instead of 110 pilgrims; they were allowed that year to visit Nankana Sahib to celebrate Guru Nanak Dev’s Janam utsav on Kattak Sudi Puranmasi in November. This Jatha returned after celebrations of the Janam utsav for three days from 22/11/1950 to 24/11/1950.

Let it be stated that earlier in its general meeting of March 13, 1966, “Resolution No 939 of the executive Committee, dated March, 13, 1966 was presented and approved that the core Committee and the Dharam Prachar Committee are fully authorized by the SGPC to take suitable decisions to ensure observance of the rules and regulations of the Gurdwara Act in the day-to-day working and management of the 500th Parkash Utsav Committee formed to celebrate the 500th Avtar Gurpurb of Sri Guru Nanak Dev and 300th Parkash Utsav of Sri Guru Gobind Singh Ji; under Resolution No. 38, dated March, 28, 1965, of the General Committees.”

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21 Ibid; March 28, 1965.
In the general meeting of the SGPC on March 31, 1973, its members expressed great pain and sorrows that in Zahiruddin Farook's English book: ‘Aurangzeb and His Times’, historical events had been presented in a distorted manner and great disrespect had been shown to the Sikh Gurus through totally false statements. It had deeply hurt the religious statements of the Sikhs. Attempts had been made to spread communal hatred in the country. Such books should never remain in circulation. The meeting, therefore, strongly demanded from the Government that that book's sale should be stopped and the unsold books should be immediately confiscated; Moreover, legal action should be taken and guilty be severely punished so that no one dared to do any such thing in future.\textsuperscript{22} With the Chairman’s permission and the consent of the house, S. Kartar Singh Takkar presented one very important resolution that was passed unanimously after endorsement from S. Karnail Singh Pakka. This resolution stated that keeping in view the sanctity of Amritsar, which was the centre of Sikhism and religious place of the Sikhs founded by Sri Guru Ram Das Ji, the Punjab government should take immediate steps to keep wine and cigarette shops outside this holy city just as such shops were not allowed in the holy cities of the Hindus like Kurukshetra, Haridwar, etc. in view of their religious sanctity.\textsuperscript{23}

The lower classes which included Mazhabi Ravidasias and Kabir Panth had been looked down upon in villages since ancient times for being poor and untouchable. Since members of the Shiromani Committee could be chosen only through elections held under strict rules, the Committee

\textsuperscript{22} Proceedings of the General Meeting of the SGPC, dated March 31, 1973, Reference Section, Library SGPC, Sri Amritsar.

\textsuperscript{23} \textit{Ibid.}
reserved 12 seats for them through Gurdwara Amendment Bill for giving them social and religious equality and strictly declared that none should call them ‘Harijans’. This word, a new invention of the Congress, was in itself, indicative of a ‘lower’ class and was being misused to be fool and exploit these people for personal gains. Thus 13 persons from this class-12 elected and one nominated-had become members of the Shiromani Committee since then. S. Gurbakhsh Singh Rahi of Ludhiana District was unanimously elected member of the Executive Council and a Dharam Parchar movement was started among these classes.24

Apart from granting substantial financial help to the lower classes and scholarships to their wards who were students, the SGPC highly commended and gave encouragement to S. Sher Singh Ludhiana for writing a book of 60 pages in Punjabi condemning untouchability and another book of 200 pages in English about Sikh religion, the Painter Thakar Singh for receiving an award from Indian President, S. Gian Singh Nakkash (engraver/ etcher) for preserving the paintings of Sri Darbar Sahib and the famous poet Lala Dhani Ram Chatrik for the service of the mother language Punjabi.25

Then, the SGPC set up a Sub-Committee with Jathedar Udhan Singh as President, S Basant Singh Moga as Acting President, S. Umrao Singh as General Secretary, and S Sarmukh Singh Chamak and S Prem Singh as executive members to look after Sikhs' rights in the Government Services. It had been corresponding with the concerned departments and many Sikh Government servants could get their due rights with its help. It must be mentioned that it was because of the Committee's effort alone that the

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24 Ibid, May 28, 1948
25 Ibid; Gurdwara Gazette, August 1948, p. 60.
Government of East Punjab had declared to give these classes’ concessions in land, scholarships, jobs etc. at par with those given to Harijans. Actions had already been initiated in this matter. They wished these poor Sikhs to make progress in every field so that there was no need to term them as backward classes.\textsuperscript{26}

On February 26, 1950, a general meeting of the SGPC was held. The meeting confined itself to the resolutions of the executive Committee. These resolutions were in connection with distributing Gutkas, Karas, and Kanghas among the prisoners in Punjab Jails, printing of Sri Guru Granth Sahib in Hindi, discussing the SGPC equity Committee 's report on the accident of November 4, 1949 at Delhi, the Committee 's holding correspondence with the Defense Minister S. Baldev Singh for the inclusion of Kirpan in Sikh uniform, emphasizing the need of religious propagation in U.P. urging the Government to concede the demands of the Mazhabi, Ravidasis and the other so-called untouchables who had embraced Sikhism and to grant scholarships to their wards, and arranging ‘Sanskar’ of ‘Birdh Birs ’ of Sri Guru Granth Sahib at Goindwal,\textsuperscript{27} etc. Then the Hukamnama issued by the Akal Takhat on 13 June 1949 about giving equal treatment to the Singhs of the backward classes was presented with the directions to implement it immediately.

When the census was conducted in 1951, the issue of \textit{Punjabi} versus Hindi cropped up. The SGPC noted with great regret and agony that a very large part of a majority class living in Punjab and PEPSU though having

\\textsuperscript{26} \textit{Ibid.} \\
Punjabi as their mother tongue got recorded Hindi as their mother tongue in its place. As a result, communal tension and distrust had increased and statistics about language was no longer correct. Therefore, this general meeting wished to make it clear to the Indian Government that the figures about mother tongue should not be deemed correct and cases should be filled against those prominent people who had violated law and got made false entries in respect of mother tongue.\(^{28}\) Presenting this resolution S. Mahinder Singh said, “The resolution is very clear. One’s mother tongue is what one has been speaking since childhood. Tensions have increased only because of the wrong entries about language. It is surprising that the Hindus in Bengal are not recording Hindi as their language. In Madras, Madrasies too are not doing so. Here Hindus are promoting communalism by recording Hindi as their language. We are not against Hindi. If a person cannot become a Christian by reading English or a Musalman by reading Urdu, how can one become a Sikh by reading Punjabi or a Hindu by reading Hindi? All of us are to read Hindi as our national language and Punjabi as the language of the state and as their mother tongue. Therefore, the Hindus have done a great wrong by creating communal tensions through false entries about their mother tongue.”\(^{29}\) S. Narinder Singh Advocate recorded the resolution pointing out that this low mentality of the fanatic Hindus of Jalandhar and Hoshiarpur would lead to evil consequences.\(^{30}\) After being strongly supported by S. Harcharan Singh Bajwa, Jathedar Udham Singh, S. Ishar

\(^{28}\) Ibid; for more details also see Jagjit Singh, Shiromani Akali Dal Ithihas, Punjabi University, Patiala, 1975; Harminder Singh, The Problems of the Sikhs in the Punjab, Lucknow, 1947.

\(^{29}\) Ibid.; The Tribune, October 15 and November 11, 1950; The Punjabi Punch, Amritsar for the month November, second half 1950.

\(^{30}\) Ibid; The Tribune, November 11 to 13, 1950.
Singh Majhail, S. Amar Singh Dosanjh, S. Bachittar Singh etc. the resolution was adopted unanimously.

In the meeting of March 10, 1955, the SGPC threw light on various aspects of the budget like the provisions made for backward class, education, propagation of religion, writing of History, training of employees, supplying Gurmat literature at cheap rates, opening museums, preserving ancient traditions of Kirtan, making records etc. The enquiries made by the members were officially answered by Prof. Waryam Singh. He suggested that the SGPC should get the history of Punjab written afresh. In reply, Giani Kartar Singh observed that it would be an act of great service to the Qaum even if, for the time being, only history of the Sikh period could be got written. S. Gurmej Singh proposed that the help of the other societies and scholars engaged in historical research should also be sought in writing history. Then in the meeting of October 16, 1955, the Committee decided to provide a social work substantial financial aid to the flood victims in different parts of the state. Also, S. Rajinder Singh presented a resolution stating. "This Annual convention of the SGPC expresses deep grief at the great havoc caused by floods in Punjab and Pepsu. It expresses full sympathy with the flood-hit people and demands from the Government of India to handle the issue of the flood victims of Punjab and Pepsu at national level and sanction maximum possible financial assistance for them. This meeting appeals to Sikh Sangats and local Gurdwaras Committees, to contribute generally to the Relief Fund set up by Shiromani Committee. The Committee assures its suffering brethren to make efforts to provide them

32 Ibid; The Spokesman, (misc. issues), Delhi, 1955; The Sikh Review, Calcutta, November, 1954 (article relating to the writing of Sikh history).
maximum help.” 33 After being supported by S. Amar Singh Dasanjh and S. Mohan Singh Mahawa, the resolution was passed unanimously.

This very meeting of Shiromani Committee viewed with great concern the growing trend under which certain sections of the majority community had been for the past few months indulging in incidents and activities to down grade the Sikhs and hurt their sentiments. The meeting drew the Government’s attention to the fact that a strong wave of anger and resentment against the Government and the people of the majority community was sure to flare up in the Sikh Panth if that situation was not brought under control. It would be highly detrimental to the defense of the country in the then crisis. 34 Some examples of that trend are forcible trimming of the beard of a Sikh truck driver in Calcutta named Charan Singh by some employees of the Bihar Government, publication of novel titles Aavaran by a New Delhi Writer named Guru Datt in which Sikh principles, culture and way of life had been made fun of. Similarly, sometime ago, the Sikhs honoured Sant Vinoba Bhave at a Diwan but he made some ugly comments about the Sikhs’ Kirpan; then Sushila Nair, Health Minister, India made fun of the Sikhs’ long hair while speaking at a Gurpurb in Delhi. Similarly, disrespect was shown to the Birs of Sri Guru Granth Sahib at various places. 35 Thus the SGPC and its leadership in particular and the Sikh masses in general took serious note of the said issues. They felt concerned and got registered their resentment at appropriate times with the central Government. They felt due to these happenings, the security and identity of

34 Ibid.
35 Ibid.
Sikhism was not simply harmed but the identity of Sikhism fell in absolute danger.

On June 1, 1964 the general body of the SGPC held its meeting. Here, it clearly displayed that it had never acted the way that could isolate this body from the main social stream of the country. That was its biggest contribution and achievement. At that time, with the permission of the chair, Rai Sardar’a Singh gave an eye witness account of the massacre at Gurdwara Paunta Sahib and presented the following resolution: 36 “The enquiry report about the desecration and massacre perpetrated by the Government servants at Gurdwara Paunta Sahib (Himachal Pardesh) on May 22, 1964 by murdering Singhs with bullets and lathi blows was presented on May 30, 1964. Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhik Committee was deeply pained at the incident. It strongly denounced that act of the Government officials of showing disrespect to the Gurdwara and Sri Guru Granth Sahib and killing innocent Sikhs. It urged upon the Central and Himachal Governments that the guilty officials should immediately be dismissed. The matter should be enquired into by a retired judge of High Court and the guilty should be punished”

In the same meeting, the SGPC strongly denounced those Congress leaders and ministers who were calling a brave and patriotic Qaum like Sikhs traitors to the country. After this, a resolution was passed which had been presented by Shiromani Akali Dal demanding the release of the war prisoners of Pakistan. Leaders of all the progressive parties of the country were demanding this release of war prisoners. 37 However, the Congressmen

36 Ibid, June 1, 1964.
did not call them traitors. Only Sikhs were being called traitors out of communal fanaticism simply because they were Sikhs. The Congress Government at the centre itself was talking about the release of war prisoners. It should not be deemed traitor for that. However, it had certainly betrayed the country by vacating 5 to 6 square miles of Pakistani territory, when hundreds of soldiers and Generals had sacrificed their lives to gain this territory, and even the Congress Government had promised the country that it would not return even an inch of this territory to Pakistan. It had played false with the countrymen by breaking that promise and returning this territory. The souls of the martyrs who conquered these territories at the cost of their lives were being insulted and put to unrest through such acts.\(^{38}\) Sikhs had won the war of independence and later on in 1962 war against China and the Indo-Pak wars of 1965 and 1971 for the country and proved that there was no Qaum more patriotic then the Sikhs in the whole country. Therefore the Congress rulers should never doubt the Sikhs’ loyalty and patriotism.\(^{39}\)

The SGPC showed its concern on certain important issues from time to time. Another resolution was unanimously passed that sympathized with the Arya Samaji Satyagrah at Hyderabad (Deccan). In its opinion their demand regarding, Socio-religious and cultural liberty of the Hindus in the dominions of His Exalted Highness, the Nizam of Hyderabad were legitimate and reasonable. So the SGPC assured them that they had complete sympathy in their Satyagrah campaign.\(^{40}\) This clearly showed that the moderate element among the Sikhs had been always taking the Hindus with

\(^{38}\) *Ibid.*

\(^{39}\) *Ibid.*

them. After that a resolution was passed about helping the famine hit people of Hisar district.\footnote{Ibid; Manji, June 30, 1939; Akali Te Pardesi, July 2, 1939.} Thus the SGPC was concerned with issues related to humanity and welfare of all the sections of society.

In its general meeting of March 11, 1938 the SGPC demanded of Gurdwara Committee Lahore to raise Gurdwara Shahid Ganj, a memorial for those innocent Sikhs who had become victim to Muslim fanaticism from July 1935 until then in connection with Gurdwara Shahid Ganj agitation.\footnote{Proceedings of the General Meeting of the SGPC, dated March 11, 1938, Reference Section, Library SGPC, Sri Amritsar.} At the same time, SGPC expressed its appreciation for Khan Abdul Ghafar Khan, Dr. Khan Sahib and his ministers for condemning the murder of innocent Sikhs and demanded of the frontier government to take effective steps to prevent its repetition.\footnote{Ibid.} On March 1, 1939 (18 Faggan, 470 NS) the general meeting of Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhik Committee under the Chairmanship of Master Tara Singh discussed some important Panthik matters, issues of Gurdwara Shahid Ganj and proposed amendment in the Gurdwara Bill that came up for discussion.\footnote{Proceedings of the General Meeting of the SGPC, dated March 1, 1939, Reference Section, Library SGPC, Sri Amritsar; The Tribune, March 3, 1939; also see Majithia Papers File No. 151, NMML, New Delhi; The Akali, March 8, 1939, October 10, 1939; The Akali Patrika October 2, 1939.} It held that the Gurdwara Amendment Bill, purposed to be presented by Tikka Jagjit Singh, was not needed as it was against Punchayati principles and Panthik unity. It was felt that its real motive was to deprive the SGPC of its legal rights and to defeat the basic purpose of the Gurdwara Reform Movement by permitting the Government to interfere in the management of gurdwara.\footnote{Ibid.} Its purpose was to thwart all the beneficial schemes proposed by the SGPC which had been
declared in the election manifesto of Shiromani Akali Dal. It was hoped that Tikka Jagjit Singh would appreciate the sentiments of the Panth on this vital issue and desist from presenting this Amendment Bill in the Assembly. The SGPC hoped from the members of Punjab Assembly, particularly from Sikh members, to oppose the Bill till the last, if it was presented in the Assembly. It also appealed to the entire Sikh Panth to beware of the impending danger and to be prepared even to sacrifice their lives to prevent its implementation if it was passed. The meeting authorized the Executive Council of the SGPC to take necessary action to prevent the passage of the Bill and its implementation if at all it was passed. The SGPC directed that 19th March, 1939 be observed as a protest day to oppose this Bill.46

In its general meeting held on January 30, 1949, the SGPC decided to send a deputation of the Committee, led by S Basant Singh Moga to the Premiere of Bihar to demand that there the Sikh gurdwaras should not come under the preview of the Bihar Religious Trust Bill. A separate Act like the Punjab Gurdwara Act was needed for their management. The Premiere promised a full consideration to their demand.47 The deputation also emphasized the need of changing the name of the Patna Railway Station from Patna city to Patna Sahib. It was to be done in view of the convenience of common Sikh travelers’ and avoid any confusion. The government was

46 This resolution was endorsed by Giani Kartar Singh MLA, S. Bhag Singh, Advocate Gurdaspur, S. Atma Singh Rawalpindi, S. Avtar Singh Barrister Gujranwala, S. Sampuran Singh MLA Barrister Lyalpur and Jathedar Udham Singh spoke in favour of the resolution while S. Amar Singh ‘Sher-e-Punjab’ and Giani Sher Singh opposed it when put to vote, the resolution was finally carried unanimously. Vide Proceedings of the General Meeting of the SGPC, dated March 19, 1939, Reference Section, Library SGPC, Sri Amritsar; The Preet Lari, March 20 to 23, 1939; The Khalsa Samachar, October 18, 1939.

47 Proceedings of the General Meeting of the SGPC (hereafter SGPC), dated January 30, 1949, Reference Section, Library SGPC, Sri Amritsar. The Tribune, February 2, 1949; also see Desh Sewak, of the same date.
urged to declare holidays on the birthdays of Guru Nanak Dev and Guru Gobind Singh.\textsuperscript{48} Another general meeting of the SGPC was held on March 2, 1949, which discussed the issue about making \textit{Punjabi} the language of courts in east Punjab. In this respect S. Mahinder Singh Sidhwan presented the following resolution, which was passed unanimously after being seconded by S. Prem Singh Prem and S. Umrao Singh. It demanded of the Government of India that without any delay, Punjabi written in Gurmukhi script should be declared the official language of the courts in ‘East Punjab’. After being proposed by Sant Inder Singh Chakkarvarti and seconded by S. Mahinder Singh Sidhwan, another resolution in this regard was passed unanimously which strongly urged the Government of Patiala and East Punjab States, Union that Punjabi should be promptly implemented as the official language in the courts of Patiala and East Punjab States, Union.\textsuperscript{49}

Expressing his views in the meeting of twenty six representatives of different communities called by the Government on 15/3/1960 to discuss the report sent by the ‘Punjabi Boli Sadbhavan Committee’, S. Harnam Singh, (Retd. Judge), High Court said that it was pointless even to consider the question of declaring two scripts for Punjabi language when Punjabi had been accepted as the language of the Punjab and every language in every country has only one script. Quoting Sri Ray Gopalacharia, Pandit Nehru, Dr Sampurna Nand and Sir George Grearson, he asserted that the best way to kill a language was to kill its script. This humbling of setting up a Committee had been created with the intention of sowing disaffection

\textsuperscript{48} \textit{Ibid.}
\textsuperscript{49} Proceedings of the General Meeting of the SGPC, dated March 2, 1949, Reference Section, Library SGPC, Sri Amritsar.
among Punjabis on the question of language- Hindi and Punjabi languages.\(^{50}\) He asked why should Punjabi not be the language of Punjab when it had accepted as a principle that primary education could not be imparted so easily and effectively in any other language other than the mother tongue in its own scripture? With these words, he presented the following resolution: ‘this meeting of SGPC has given serious consideration to the 26 members’ language Committee set up to consider ways and means to solve linguistic disputes. After consideration of the whole matter, the meeting records:\(^{51}\) (a) That the Committee is being organized to unsettle the formula that was settled several years ago; (b) That the Committee has been formed in utter contravention of the statutory provisions that were formed in November, 1956; (c) That the recommendations of good relations Committee had already been rejected by Shiromani Akali Dal, SGPC and Chief Khalsa Diwan. That having the position matters, no useful purpose would be served by reconsidering the report that had already been rejected by the Sikhs; (d) That the only solution of the linguistic trouble in the Punjab was the bifurcation of the Punjab on the basis of the language of the Punjabi zone and Hindi zone In these circumstances, the SGPC did not feel justified in participating in the language Committee set up by the Punjab government.’

S. Gurnam Singh, Retd. Judge High Court asserted, ‘I fail to understand the purpose of the meeting of March 15\(^{th}\) called at this stage. It is to take a decision about Punjabi language when the Congress Government has already agreed to form language based states. The Central Government has included Punjabi at No 10 in the list of 26 languages. Bombay is being

\(^{50}\) Proceedings of the General Meeting of the SGPC, dated March 15, 1960, Reference Section, Library SGPC, Sri Amritsar; Gurdwara Gazette, March and April, 1960.

\(^{51}\) Ibid.
reorganized into two states on the basis of language; Punjab has already been divided into Hindi and Punjabi zones under the regional formula’. With these words, he strongly supported the resolution. Master Tara Singh, President, SGPC told the meeting that: 52 (i) The Punjab Government had no right to interfere and consider the Regional Formula, which had emerged as a result of an agreement between the Government of India and Shiromani Akali Dal; (ii) What was the purpose of S. Partap Singh Kairon, Chief Minister Punjab calling a meeting to discuss the report which had already been rejected by all the Sikh bodies. All that was being done to put off the demand for a Punjabi State; (iii) The question of Punjabi language had already been settled, the Government had accepted it and it enjoys the blessings of the central Government also thinking over the matter then would mean starting fresh disputes; (iv) He was sure that neither Giani Kartar Singh nor S. Gian Singh Rarewala would join the Committee because that partisan Committee would be an anti-Punjab Committee; (v) Creation of a Punjab state was the only solution to all the issues. There would surely be a morcha against the Government, which was creating hurdles to stall the formation of Punjabi state. Therefore, anti-Punjab Committee’ should be boycotted. Thus, in the midst of resounding slogans, resolution was passed unanimously.

On March 28, 1965, a general meeting was held in which it further viewed with disgust the fact that under the influence of communal mentality and machination many sided efforts were being made to undermine the national pride of the Sikhs using the title ‘Sri’ instead of ‘Sardar’ in writing or speaking out the name of a Sikh was a part of this conspiracy. This

meeting therefore, urged upon the Government, non-Sikh communities, newspapers correspondents only to use ‘Sardar’ before a Sikh name.⁵³ The question of the Punjab Government once again declaring holidays on Hindu festivals only after it had stopped holidays on Ram Naunmi, Janam Ashtami, Shivratri, Martyrdom day of Guru Aryan Dev and Sri Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji, and Shahid Jor Mel, Sri Fatehgarh Sahib came up before the general meeting. It was resolved that the Government be urged to undo this discrimination by declaring holidays at Government level on the martyrdom days of Sri Guru Arjan Dev, Sri Guru Tegh Bahadur, Baba Zorawar Singh, Baba Fateh Singh who made supreme sacrifices to free the country from the fetters of slavery. The meeting demanded of the Government of India that office of the Central Government too should observe holiday on the Avtar Purab of the great Protector of the country Sri Guru Gobind Singh Ji.⁵⁴

The general meeting of SGPC expressed deep agony at the fact that instead of giving to Punjabi the status it deserved, a step motherly treatment was being meted out and it was being pushed back day by day. Although decision had been taken to implement Punjabi at district level but no sincere efforts had been made to act on it. Wherever some action was taken, things were changing then and languages other than Punjabi was being used in offices and courts at district level. The meeting urged upon the government to fulfill its promise by implementing the decision to use Punjabi in Gurmukhi script at state level so that the injustice being done to Punjabi could be removed.⁵⁵ This general meeting of SGPC felt greatly distressed that the issue of the maintenance of the gurdwaras left in Pakistan and their

⁵³ Ibid; also see The Tribune, March 28, 1965.
⁵⁴ Ibid; also see Gurdwara Gazettee, March – April 1965, p. 31.
⁵⁵ Ibid.
income and property had not been settled yet at Government level by India and Pakistan. Indian Government had reserved the properties left in India by Muslim institutions for the sole benefit of the Muslims and set up Wakf Boards for their management. Those places and properties were looked after and maintained by these Boards. However, the Sikh gurdwaras left in Pakistan had big properties. The Wakf Boards constituted for them were totally dependent on the representatives of the Government of Pakistan. The representative body of the Sikhs- SGPC had not been given any representation on the boards nor had the interests of Sikh religious places taken into consideration. This meeting therefore strongly demanded that the Government of India should prevail upon the Pakistani Government to include the representatives of SGPC and gurdwara Sri Dehra Sahib in the Wakf Board that was responsible for the repairs, maintenance and management of the properties of gurdwaras left behind in Pakistan. These representatives should be authorized to utilize the income of the gurdwara properties for the benefit of Sikh religious places and their repair and maintenance.

In the general meeting of March 20, 1966, the SGPC strongly demanded that the properties of religious places and Sikh gurdwaras be exempted from Punjab Tenancy Act. The meeting regretted to say that despite the Committee’s long correspondence and several memoranda and deputations sent by it, no steps had been taken by the Government to exempt the gurdwara properties from articles regarding ceiling and lease. The Committee expressed displeasure at this negligence of the Government and
strongly demanded that gurdwara properties should be immediately exempted from these articles of the Punjab Tenancy Act.”56

Then Justice Gurnam Singh presented a resolution of support for the Sikhs serving in England on the question of turban and sporting a beard demanding that the British Government should pass an order about turban and beard which went against the Panthik Rehat Maryada. This resolution was in English which was passed unanimously and sent to the British Government.57 The SGPC expressed concerned in connection with S. Lachhman Singh Gill's unjust attitude after becoming the Chief Minister of Punjab. Therefore, the following resolution was introduced about the statements made by S. Lachhman Singh Gill against Sant Chanan Singh and Sant Baba Fateh Singh in the press and in the general meeting after assuming office as Chief Minister, Punjab: “Claims are being made that after taking over as Chief Minister Punjab, S Lachhman Singh Gill, General Secretary, Gurdwara Parbandhik Committee has issued threats to Sant Chanan Singh, President and Sant Baba Fateh Singh, member Shiromani Committee and Dharam Parchar Committee in the press and on public platforms. They were asked to leave SGPC failing which they and their supporters will be humiliated and forced out of gurdwaras and SGPC. He made such remarks against the Sants from public platform on Dec., 9, 1967.”58 These were published in the press one or two days later. He in the press and on public platforms was repeatedly making such threatening and objectionable statements. Later on, at his behest, false cases were instituted

56 Ibid.
57 Ibid.
by the police against the President, office bearers and other officials of the Committee. By doing so, S Lachhman Singh Gill had grossly misused his position and he had done it with the intention of maligning gurdwara management and then office bearers to serve his selfish interests. Despite being a member of SGPC, he had committed a highly deplorable act of under mining the Sikh’s respect and devotion for gurdwaras. He had made a fatal attack on Sikh religion and religious places at the bidding of the central Government. Willfully ignoring his duties in the capacity of a member of SGPC, he had tried to bring down the dignity of the institution of which he himself was member; in a very disgraceful manner. It was contrary to tradition, Maryada and article 144 of Sikh Gurdwara Act. As a Chief Minister, he had made a direct intervention in Gurdwara Management. The Sikh Panth had made great sacrifices for the freedom of gurdwaras, no interference by the Government in gurdwaras could ever be tolerated nor would these evil policies of S. Lachhman Singh Gill and the Delhi Government be ever tolerated.59

This meeting of SGPC being held on February 12, 1968 strongly condemned the policies and disgraceful act of S. Lachhman Singh Gill; it directed the Committee to take suitable action against him immediately amidst slogans of Sat Sri Akal. In connection with Resolution No 179 dated April, 15, 1967 of the Core Committee; the issue of the SGPC of Delhi state came up. It was unanimously resolved that “This general meeting of SGPC fully authorizes the Committee to fight legal cases about the SGPC of Delhi state replacing the old Committee with a new one if need be and of holding

59 Ibid.
elections”60 At this juncture, after a pause, it sincerely felt that after the country’s partition, large number of Punjabis, especially Sikhs had got settled in many states like Haryana, Delhi, Chandigarh, Himachal Pardesh, Jammu-Kashmir, Ganganagar District of Rajasthan and some areas of U.P. They had contributed substantially to the development of these states. However, sadly enough nothing worthwhile had been done by these states to recognize Punjabi language, literature and culture. Consequently, the wards of Punjabi families were facing great difficulties in the field of education and they were being alienated from the roots of their culture. This meeting strongly urged the governments of the above mentioned states to recognize and accept Punjabi language in Gurmukhi script so that the Punjabis settled there could get school and college education in their mother tongue as per their desire.61 The SGPC realized that the Jalandhar station of All India Radio was very important for Punjab since it was situated in the middle of Punjabi Suba. It should, therefore, be run in such a manner that it truly represented the voice of the Punjabis. The meeting was of the view that then that station was not doing justice to Punjabi language, literature, culture and history. It strongly demanded from the central government that that station should assign the same status to Punjabi language as was enjoyed by other regional languages at regional radio stations in different states. Programmes being broadcast for Haryana and Himachal Pardesh from Jalandhar Radio Station should then be broadcast from Delhi Radio Station.62

In the general meeting of the SGPC of November 23, 1969, S. Gurcharn Singh Tohra read out the budget for the year 1969-70 and told the

60 Ibid, February 12, 1968.
61 Ibid.
62 Ibid.
members that the Committee had made efforts to make up the loss that the Committee had suffered for the last 41 years. The total income then stood at rupees 1,39,67,990 (Rupees One crore, thirty-nine Lakh, Sixty Seven thousand, Nine Hundred and ninety rupees), whereas that was rupees 60 to 62 thousand before the present office bearers took charge. Then he spoke about the special income, general expenses, expenses of great importance, special expenses etc. concerning with the General Board Fund, and dwelt in detail, on the celebration of the 500th Parkash Utsav of Sri Guru Nanak Dev Ji. He told, “the Committee is faced with a large number of important tasks like publicity campaign about Sri Guru Nanak Dev Jis’ 500th Parkash Utsav, publicity through films, Sikh Shahid Missionary College, Government literature about the Gurus, special issues of Gurdwara Gazette and Gurmat Parkash, U.P. Sikh Mission Hapur, Religious examinations, scholarships to students, Guru Nanak Mission etc. It is with the co-operation of the Sikh Sangats that the income of the Committee, as stated above, has risen from 60-62 thousand rupees to rupees 1, 34, 67,990”. This speech of S. Gurcharan Singh Tohra was applauded and endorsed by several members like S. Kartar Singh Takkar, S. Pritam Singh Rajgarh, S Ajaib Singh Mormdo, S. Narain Singh Khurana, S. Tara Singh Laylpuri, S. Kartar Singh Joshilla, S Karnail Singh Farwali, S Jagir Singh Poohla, and others. Then the budgets of the following: The general Board Fund of SGPC; Darbar Sahib, Mukatsar; Gurdwara Dukh Nivaran Sahib, Patiala; Gurdwara, Sultanpur Lodhi; Takht Kesgarh Sahib, Anandpur; Gurdwara Nanakana Sahib,

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64 Ibid.
65 Ibid.
Sangrur; Takht Damdama Sahib, Talwandi Sabo, Bathinda; Dhamtan Sahib and Sikh Historical Research Board, for the year 1969-70 were passed.66

S. Jiwan Singh Umranangal presented the following resolution, seconded by S. Jagdev Singh MLA that this general meeting of the SGPC expressed its concern at restrictions about loose beards imposed on Sikhs on Indian Navy ships and the punishments meted out in that connection. It considered that to be a very serious matter that the Sikh employees of Indian Navy ships were not only being dismissed but also court martialled and sentenced to imprisonment. It was an unbearable act of injustice to the Sikhs and the principles of Sikhism.67 This meeting of the SGPC strongly demanded from the Defense Department of the Indian Government to immediately withdraw these restrictions, release the imprisoned Sikhs and reinstate them. Beard is religious symbol of the Sikhs and the restriction imposed by the Navy was unbearable to them keeping in view the religious sentiments of the Sikhs; the Government should immediately remove these restrictions68 and full liberty should be given to them to follow the principles of Sikhism.

In the general meeting of November 12, 1967, the SGPC demanded a quota of sugar from the Government for Karha Parshad in all the gurdwaras. It also approved the supplementary budget of rupees 28968-98 as education fund for Mata Gujri College, Fatgehgarh Sahib Sirhind for the year 1967-68 or 1968-69.69 The meeting felt that on the occasion of the 500th Parkash Utsav of Sri Guru Nanak Dev which fell in the coming year i.e. 1969;

66 Ibid.
67 Ibid
68 Ibid.
centers should be set up to organize the Sikhs living in foreign countries and to propagate Sikh religion among them. This meeting approved the setting up of Sikh Missions by the SGPC in at least five countries with considerable Sikh population in the memory of the founder of Sikh religion. The Quancentenary Committee appointed by President, SGPC being given full authority to chalk out programmes in this connection”70

Another meeting of the SGPC took place on March 30, 1971, in which Principal Joginder Singh Manpur Khand (Ludhiana) was nominated member of the History Board in place of S. Shiv Singh Jhawan. After that S Santokh Singh, Delhi presented one resolution about declaring Punjabi the second language after Hindi in Himachal Pardesh and Haryana. It strongly appealed to the Indian Government that Punjabi should be the second language in the said two states. As large number of Sikhs lived in Delhi, therefore Punjabi should be accepted as the second language there and to remove the discrimination against Punjabis.71 This general meeting of SGPC felt deeply distressed to see that such sign boards had been set up at the Government roadways bus stands of Amritsar and on the buses, which encouraged smoking Biris and Cigarette. That type of advertising was causing great pain to the Sikhs and insults to their religion. Smoking was as serious a violation of religious vows (बैरिज) Sikhs as beef-eating was for Hindus and Pork eating for the Muslims. The Shiromani Committee, therefore, asked the High officials of the Roadways and the Punjab Government to immediately stop this hurtful advertisement; take off such boards from Government

70 Ibid.
institutions and stop sticking such posters on them. In the general meeting of the SGPC on November 28, 1973, it expressed pain and sorrow at the British Government’s refusal to exempt Sikhs from wearing helmets while riding motor-cycles. It was all the more sad that the U.K. Government had not granted this exemption despite knowing that religious and historical fact that wearing any type of cap was prohibited to Sikhs. A feeling was gaining ground in the Sikh world that by not exempting Sikh motor-cyclists, the British Government was not merely hurting religious sentiments of the Sikhs but also indirectly interfering in Sikh religion and doing injustice and discrimination against them. The meeting strongly demanded from the central Government to safeguard the interests of the Sikhs living abroad. Then, raising a voice against the detention of Giani Bakhshish Singh, General Secretary, U.K. Akali Dal on his coming to Amritsar from England to attend the Bhog of late Sant Baba Fateh Singh; this general meeting of SGPC strongly condemned the Punjab Governments decision to re-detain Giani Bakhshish Singh, for a week and the central Governments' strange decision to exile him and not to allow him to return to India. In free India, it seemed discriminatory order to exiling a respectable Sikh living abroad. Earlier S. Sohan Singh Sodhi had been exiled in the same manner. The meeting wanted to tell the Government of India that exile orders were nothing new to Sikh Panth. The English Government had also issued exile orders against patriotic Sikhs. However, the Sikh Panth had always fought bravely against such acts of discrimination. The meeting desired to make it

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72 Ibid.
74 Ibid.
clear to the Indian Government that the Khalsa Panth would never give up struggle until it had secured its religious, political and socio-cultural rights through self sacrifices. Resolutions were unanimously passed about getting Punjabi declared the second official language in Haryana, Himachal and Delhi in view of the large Punjabi population there; getting joint and simultaneous elections of the SGPC held as per the Reorganization Act, 1969; Upgrading and strengthening the All India Radio station, Jalandhar for promoting Punjabi Programs; ending atrocities on Muslim minorities of Malerkotla Tehsil; warning of Sikhs against pseudo-Nirankari Gurcharan Singh-a tout of the Delhi Government; and ending excesses being committed against the American soldiers in Germany who had recently embraced Sikhism for sporting beards and turbans.\textsuperscript{75}

In the general meeting of the SGPC of March 10, 1974, Bhai Gopal Singh, Ragi Sri Darbar Sahib, Amritsar; Sant Bishan Singh, Manji Sahib Wale; S. Chanan Singh Wasale (Jalandhar); K. S. Bela Singh Jandhu Singh (Jalandhar) and Master Harnam Singh (Ludhiana) ex-members, Shiromani Committee felt concerned and were indeed upset regarding one of the decisions taken by the Defense Ministry of the country regarding the policy of recruitment in the Army.\textsuperscript{76} S. Ajaib Singh MLA, Member Shiromani Committee presented the following resolution: “This general meeting of SGPC expresses deep concern at Defense Minister Sri Jag Jiwan Ram’s announcement in the Lok Sabha about limiting the army recruitments of martial Qaum s of northern India-which include Sikhs also in proportion to their population. SGPC deems its duty to point out well in time, that policy

\textsuperscript{75} Ibid.

will under mine the Country’s security. At the same time, this policy will do
great injustice to this martial Qaum s by ignoring their fighting Skills. While
civil recruitments are made by the Government on the basis of the
candidate’s merit, it will be totally unjust not to make army recruitment
solely on the basis of competitive skills. Nor will it be in the country’s
interest. The security of the country demands that this announcement made
in the Lok Sabha about limiting Army recruitment of martial Qaum s should
be immediately withdrawn and justice be done to the martial Qaum s of
Punjab, Haryana and Himachal Pardesh”.77 In fact, it was presented in the
meeting of November 25, 1974. After an eloquent speech, Principal
Harchand Singh presented the following resolution demanding the return of
Sri Guru Gobind Singh’s ‘Kalgi’ and Maharaja Dalip Singh’s ‘Asthis’:78 “It
is a historical fact that after Punjab’s occupation, the English Government
took away from the Royal treasury at Lahore, the tenth Guru, Sri Guru
Gobind Singh’s ‘Kalgi’, the gold throne and the invaluable Sri Sahib of
Maharaja Ranjit Singh, the Kohinoor diamond and other priceless relics. No
steps have been taken by the Government of India after the country’s
independence to get back these relics from the English.” So, this meeting
resolved that through Punjab Government and the Government of India, the
British Government should be urged to return these objects, which were of
historic significance to the people of Punjab in general and the Sikhs in
particular.79

In the general meeting of the SGPC held on October 30, 1975, it
deply resented the government’s action in imposing income tax on the

77  Ibid.
78  Proceedings of the General Meeting of the SGPC, dated November 25, 1974,
Reference Section, Library SGPC, Sri Amritsar.
offerings made at Gur Dhams and strongly condemned it. In no civilized country was income tax imposed on the income of religious places because this income was spent on public welfare. The meeting therefore urged the Government not to belittle itself by levying income tax on the offerings made at gurdwaras. This income was being spent on Langar, education, hospitals, and public lodging places for the benefit of the people. This income was for the welfare of mankind and did not belong to any individual.\textsuperscript{80} Even at present, the same argument can be given in respect of the income tax on the earnings of the Sikh gurdwaras. It pointed out with great resentment that by charging tax at the rate of rupees 30 per truck and rupees 10 per trolley carrying pilgrims to Sri Anandpur Sahib on the occasion of Hola Mohalla, the congress Government of Punjab had not only revived the memories of \textit{Jazia} imposed by Aurangzeb on Hindus but also made an unpardonable attack on the freedom of pilgrimage to religious places. This general meeting wished to tell the Government that the freedom of religious places was very dear to the Sikh Panth. It was not ready to accept any \textit{Jazia} on visits to religious places. If the government stuck to its decision to impose tax, the Sikh Panth would be constrained to launch a struggle against it.\textsuperscript{81}

The SGPC took some important decision pertaining to the historical events. Another important task of the SGPC was directly related to the death Anniversary of Sher-e-Punjab Maharaja Ranjit Singh. As proposed by Giani Kartar Singh, it was unanimously passed that a holiday should be observed in its office and all the Panthik Ashrams and the Punjab Government should be urged to declare a public holiday in Punjab on his 100\textsuperscript{th} death anniversary

\textsuperscript{80} \textit{Ibid.}
\textsuperscript{81} \textit{Ibid.}
On 29th June, 1939 (15 Haarh) and Ardas should be held in all the Gurdwaras on that very day at 5pm-the time of the Maharaja’s passing away—for the peace of his soul and the Panth s' ascendancy to glory.\(^\text{82}\)

On July 7, 1948, the Shiromani Committee made it clear that it had set up Dharamarth branch on 1st April, 1945 with the primary object of public welfare. As the name indicated, Education and Dharam Parchar were given the highest importance. Therefore, a separate department under the name Dharam Parchar came into being in the Shiromani Committee. The primary job of the department was to send Parcharaks far and wide in the country and abroad and to award scholarships to Gurmat students. And it had been performing this duty sincerely since then.\(^\text{83}\) Keeping in view this noble objective S. Mohan Singh Nagoke, Jathedar Sri Akal Takht Sahib, under the directions of the Shiromani Committee held Diwan s and did Amrit Parchar at a large number of Malwa villages like Ajitwal, Salina, Nathewal, Sekha, Faullewal, Deena, Takhtupura, Badhni, Darauli Bhai ki, Bagha Purana, Gaziana, Pak, Masse, Raoke Kalan etc. with great foresight and devotion and with the cooperation of his Ragi Jatha and Parcharak Singh's. The Sikh History Society organized a series of lectures on history. Professor Ganda Singh, S. Randhir Singh, gurdwara Inspector, S. Mahna Singh, Headmaster, and S. Sarmukh Singh Amol were the eminent speakers in this series of lectures.\(^\text{84}\) Similarly, Singh Sahib Giani Bhupinder Singh, Granthi Sri Harmandar Sahib enlightened Sikh Sangats through his highly informative

\(^{82}\) Proceedings of the General Meeting of the SGPC, dated June 29, 1939, Reference Section, Library SGPC, Sri Amritsar; Manji, June 30, 1939; The Tribune July 5, 1939; The Khalsa Te Khalsa Advocate, June 30, 1939.


\(^{84}\) Ibid; also see RNN, for the month July and August, 1948.
lectures on Sikh way of life, Sat Sangat, Gur Shiromani, Kakaar, Philosophy, Amrit Sikhi Rehat, Nam-Simaran and Spirit to serve at religious Diwan s held at Guru ka Bagh every Sunday. These lectures were effective from the point of view of Dharam Parchar.85

On November 11, 1956, the SGPC in its general meeting unanimously passed that that was very essential to build a be-fitting gurdwara at the historical place in Gwalior Fort, commemorating the Sixth Guru of the Sikhs, Sri Hargobind Sahib, Data Bandi-chhor. The General House had come to know that the Archives Department wanted to consign it to oblivion through constant neglect. Therefore the General House made a strong demand that that historical place should be maintained and the Sikhs should be permitted, at the earliest, to make a gurdwara there.86 Some miscellaneous issues regarding Gurdwara management were also discussed as the SGPC wanted to purify managements of various gurdwaras in order to strengthen the Sikh religion as well as its characteristics and identity.87

The general meeting of the SGPC held on February 17, 1957, was equally important as Prof. Satbir Singh presented the resolution: “Today’s general meeting appeals to the whole Sikh Sangat and all the ‘Sabhas’ and societies that from now onwards, they should get Sri Guru Granth Sahib printed only as per the pawan Bir printed by Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhik Committee. It is in accordance with the pawan Adi Bir of Sri Kartar Sahib and the historical ‘Bir’ of Sri Damdama Sahib. A list of the ‘Pothis’ different from the Birs of Sri kartarpur and Sri Damdam Sahib

85 Ibid; Gurdwara Gazette, for the year 1948.
87 Ibid.
contained in the Birs printed earlier than the one got printed by the SGPC, should be prepared and sent to all Singh Sabhas and societies so that they could make required amendments in all the Birs to ensure a correct recital of Shiromani.” The core Committee’s recommendation for the sanction of rupees 20,000 out of the General Board Fund in the current financial year for the construction of Guru Nanak Sarai at Gurdwara Sri Ber Sahib, Sultan Pur Lodhi was presented and passed in the general meeting of the SGPC, held on November 27, 1959.

On November 30, 1961, the general meeting of the SGPC was held in which the General Secretary presented the supplementary Budget for 1961-62. It also included the budgets of Dharam Parchar Committee s, Haryana and U.P; Sikh Mission; General Board; Fund for Guru Nanak Girls Higher Secondary Schools, Amritsar; Gurdwara Ber Sahib, Sultanpur Lodhi; Gurdwara Mukatsar; Dhanatan Sahib; Tarn Taran, etc.. Also during discussion Prof. Satbir Singh observed that the Shiromani Committee should spend less on litigation and allot more funds for propagation of Sikh religion and research of Sikh History. A comprehensive and constructive scheme should especially be prepared for conducting research in Sikh History. He also emphasized the need of raising memorials for Guru Sahibans and persons related to Sikh history to serve as lighthouses bringing out the glory and greatness of the history of the Sikh Qaum. He also suggested that two separate Presses should be set up for the printing of Gur Shiromani and Sikh history. He pointed out that greater stress should be laid on constructing

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88 Ibid., November 27, 1959.
90 Ibid.
halls for Sikh Parchar in big cities; publishing research works on Sikh History, giving suitable encouragement to their writers, engraving pictures from Sikh History on the walls of the Parkarma of Harmandir Sahib, Sri Darbar Sahib, arranging lighting of modern type to enhance the beauty of the Darbar Sahib, sending good Parcharak district wise for Gurmat Parchar, producing good illustrated literature for children’s recreation,\textsuperscript{91} etc. Then resolutions regarding educational aid to Damdama College and Sikh History Board were presented and passed.

In the meeting of March 3, 1963 of the SGPC, Prof. Satbir Singh put forward the following constructive proposals:\textsuperscript{92} (i) In the side corridors of the Parkarma scheme of Sri Darbar Sahib, pictures of the martyrs of Sikh Misls, Sikh Rule and Akali Movements should be installed after preparing comprehensive list from Guru Nanak Dev time to Guru Gobind Singh time; (ii) In view of the great demand for shabad records, the Shiromani Committee should immediately get prepared recordings of chosen ‘Shabads’; (iii) It should immediately set up a separate communication department. A circular should be sent to all the Singh Sabhas, organizations and leaders to report to this department whatever and wherever they read about the Sikhs, and the Sikh objectives, Sikh religion and Sikh history so that the department could take necessary action; (iv) A reception office should be set up in the office of the SGPC so that the visitors could be helped in getting required information about the religion and religious institutions set up by the SGPC after the partition; (v) It should arrange to reconstruct dilapidated gurdwaras other wise many relics of the Sikhs like the samadhs of Nawab Kapur Singh would be destroyed; (vi) Propagation of

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{91} Ibid.}
\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{92} Ibid., March 3, 1963.}
religion was not being conducted satisfactorily. Parcharks should not be paid workers. It should produce devoted workers like Dr. Kartar Singh Bariwale; (vii) The Missionary College had done good work and produced excellent Parcharaks but its working during the past 5 to 6 years had not been up to the mark; (Viii) They wished to see excellent printings being done in the gurdwara Printing Press at cheap rates as was done in the case of Hindu religious Granths in Geeta Press Gorakhpur. Efforts should be made to bring it to the level of Geeta Press, Gorakhpur; (ix) The 300th Janam utsav of Sri Guru Gobind Singh fell in 1966, so it was decided to spend rupees 5000 on its celebration; and (x) The sum of rupees 10,000 was set apart to celebrate the 500th Birthday of Sri Guru Nanak Dev, though it was too meager sum, it was realized by the SGPC's leadership. It should be increased, was suggested by Sahib Singh. It is worth mentioning that the SGPC gave an assurance to act upon these constructive proposals made by Prof Sahib Singh.

This general meeting of the SGPC too viewed with concern the continuous degradation coming over the daily conduct of the common Sikhs and Sikh Ashrams. It was decided:93 (a) a deep thought should be given to the matter. To remedy the situation, a Committee of selected and capable Panth ik leaders and scholars should be set up to prepare a manuscript of proposals to improve the conduct of Dharam Parchar. It should give its report within a fixed period of time. The matter should then be presented before the interim Committee for necessary action; (b) the meeting felt that a grand Memorial should be set up at a suitable place in Sri Amritsar in the memory of the Singh's who attained martyrdom in the Akali Movement,

93 Ibid.
Gurdwara Reform Movement, in the war of liberation and during the course of partition of the Punjab. A Committee of scholars and thinkers should be formed to prepare a comprehensive scheme in this regard. It should present its report within a fixed period of time. The Committee is fully authorized to implement that Report; (c) the meeting felt that the Committee initiated a movement to install marble slabs at religious places and gurdwaras in the concerned mohallas, towns and cities on which the names of the Singhs and Singhnis of the areas who had made sacrifices in the Gurdwara Reform Movement, should be engraved; (d) Sign Boards should be put up at suitable places in the cities in Punjab where the Panth had set up morchas during the Gurdwara Reform Movement and Singhs had laid down their lives. These Boards, set up before gurdwara or at gates of forts, should contain a brief account of these sacrifices. The office should present to the core Committee its reports regarding the items (a) and (b) at the earliest; (e) an authentic history of the Gurdwara Reform Movement should be got written. A collection of memorable photographs and films of the movement should be completed. The writings reports and opinions of well-known non-Sikh personalities like Pt. Madan Mohan Malvia, Prof. C.F. Andrews, C. R. Das, Hakim Ajmal Khan, Gandhi, etc. should be made for inclusion in this history. The office should immediately prepare a scheme in this regard and also present it to the core Committee; (f) an authentic report of the efforts made, until date, by the Shiromani Committee for the propagation of Sikh (including the efforts of the All India Sikh mission) should be got prepared. The office should take necessary action in this regard at the earliest; (g) Gurdwara Reform Movement and Akali Movement had been accepted as a part National Movement for the country’s freedom. Therefore, a Committee should be formed to hold consultations with the Punjab and Central
Government to construct be-fitting memorials for those patriots who sacrificed their lives in the movements like the Gurdwara Reform Movement, the Kamaghata Maru incident, the Gadar Movement (which included 3 cases of Lahore conspiracy 1913-15 and Gurdwara Rakabganj Movement), Babbar Akali Movement, etc. This Committee should submit its report to the interim Committee; and (h) The Committee knew it very well that the Punjabi culture included virtues like humility, tolerance, fraternity free from social and religious bigotry, bravery, spiritual leanings, service doing good to others, reciting god’s name (a gift of India’s Bhagti Lehar), patriotism, love for zealous toil, constructive thinking and good health, healthy entertainment, cheerfulness etc. These contours of this grand culture bore an imprint of the sacred Shiromani of the Sikh Gurus and the Sikh traditions, which stood true to the standards of secularism. This healthy Punjabi culture was the most prominent rose in the garden of the composite culture of India. The Committee, therefore, drew special attention of the Punjab and Central Governments and the officials of the All India Radio to the need to allotting maximum time slot at all the Radio stations in general and the Jalandhar Radio station in particular. It was for the daily broadcast of GurShiromani Kirtan and historical programmes about Sri Guru Nanak Dev and Sri Guru Gobind Singh for the all-round benefit of the country.\textsuperscript{94} Necessary correspondence should be carried on in that regard and the President was authorized to set up a Committee of competent individuals with the honorary secretary of the Shiromani Committee as its convener for the fulfillment of that object.

\textsuperscript{94} \textit{Ibid.}
It was further made clear by the SGPC that it was also its duty: (i) To institute research scholarships about Sikh religion, literature, philosophy, history and way of living; (ii) This department would be directly responsible to SGPC; (iii) If need be the President may set up a Sikh Literary Publication Advisory Committee of scholars to advise this department. It may consist of at least five and at the most eleven members. Their service would be honorary and whose term would be of 5 years like the term of the Shiromani Committee. This Committee would be responsible to the Executive Council; (iv) The Executive Council of the SGPC would have the right to create temporary or permanent posts for the help of the publication officer. Employees from other departments of Shiromani Committee may be transferred to this department and vice-versa. President, Shiromani Committee will have the right to do so; (v) its rules, regulations and service rules would be applicable to this department like other departments. All the articles of Sikh Gurdwara Act would also apply to members of this Committee as well as the employees, the scholars, etc. appointed for the Committee. They are not members of the Shiromani Committee. They would submit a certificate in writing at the time of appointment that they would work in the interest of the SGPC; (vi) This department will hold at least six meetings in a year. The concerned Publication officer would issue the notice of the meeting after consulting President, SGPC. Fifteen days notice would be enough for a meeting but only a three days notice was required for a special (emergency) meeting. The Quorum of the meeting would be 1/3 of the total members; (vii) the department will have a separate account in a bank approved by the Shiromani Committee. The Executive Council (निजी चौमंडी) would authorize its operation; (viii) Separate accounts would be maintained by the department which was to be checked
by the audits appointed by Punjab Government under Sikh Gurdwara Act.;
(ix) The Interim Council (ਅਲਿਵਰਨਾ ਵਿਭਾਗ) of the Shiromani Committee was authorized to issue and to take necessary decisions about the working, supervision, purchases, payment of bills, accounts etc. of the department; and (x) All the property, literature and staff of Gurdwara Printing Press and Gurmat Literature Department shall be handed over to this department the assets. Liabilities of these departments would then be the responsibility of this department.

On October 3, 1926, resolution was unanimously adopted that dates as per Khalsa year should be used in the Boards work of every kind. But there would be no objection to using dates as per English Calendar along side.\(^{95}\) Another meeting of Gurdwara Central Board (SGPC) supported the resolution that had been passed earlier in connection with English calendar.\(^{96}\) A general meeting of the SGPC held on October 8, 1927 resolved that a monthly newspaper should be published to communicate correct information about the functioning of the Sikh festivals, Local Gurdwara Committees and the gurdwaras. This newspaper should be called ‘Gurdwara Gazette’ like the Government Gazette. The Executive Council should take decision about raising funds for it and other matters’ related to the printing of religious and other literature.\(^{97}\)

Influence of Sikhism was declining in Sikh states as a result of the Maharaja of Nabha, Partap Singh becoming Patit. If it was not stopped

\(^{95}\) Proceeding of the General Meeting of SGPC dated October 2, 1926.

\(^{96}\) Ibid.

\(^{97}\) Proceedings of the General Meeting of the SGPC, dated October 8, 1927, Reference Section, Library SGPC, Sri Amritsar; *The Tribune*, October 9, 1927; Punjab Government Report, (hereafter PGR), Fortnight ending October 15, 1927, Government of India (hereafter GOI), Home Political File No. 18/6-1927.
immediately, it would cause a severe setback to Sikhism and also the Sikh community.\textsuperscript{98} Thus this meeting had been called to think over this important issue. Presenting a resolution, S. Harnam Singh Advocate said: ‘There might be serious differences about several issues among us but so far as I can gauge the feelings of the various groups, there is not even a single individual in this meeting who does not agree that no Patit should be made Maharaja of any Sikh state’. S. Kartar Singh Diwan expressed support for the resolution and it was passed unanimously. In view of the sentiments of the Panth, 26\textsuperscript{th} May was fixed as the protest day to exert moral pressure on Maharaja of Nabha. A resolution against helmets for Sikh army men was introduced in this very meeting. At Jathedar Udham Singh’s proposal and endorsement from S. Partap Singh it was unanimously passed that the proposed helmet for Indian army personnel was like the English cap and negated Sikh Rehat Maryada and Sikhs sentiments. Its wearing therefore was not permitted.\textsuperscript{99} The SGPC held another general meeting on April 3, 1940; in it a resolution urging Maharaja Partap Singh of Nabha to sport ‘Kes’ (long hair) was introduced. Resolution to set up a press for printing Gur Shiromani and history was placed in its meeting of November 30, 1940 by S. Harcharan Singh. It read, “Even a casual look at Gur Shiromani and history books reveals that the paper used is of inferior quality and no attention is being paid to correct writing and printing. Gur Shiromani and Gur-history is the fountain heads of the Panth’s glory. For the preservation and propagation of Gur Shiromani and Gur-history, it is essential to bring it under Panthik control and SGPC must have its own press for this purpose.

\textsuperscript{98} \textit{Ibid}; N.N. Mittra, Indian Register, 1940, Vol. I, pp.316,323.  
\textsuperscript{99} \textit{Ibid}; \textit{The Akali Te Pardesi}, February 22, 1940; for further details also see Majithia Papers, File No. 2, NMML, New Delhi.
Gur Shiromani and Gur-history should be correctly printed on paper of superior quality and made available to the Sangat at cost price for propagation of Sikh religion and teachings of the Sikh Gurus”. The resolution was endorsed by S. Gurdit Singh Jhang. After some discussion another resolution came up after S. Fumman Singh’s proposal and Giani Dhanwant Singh’s endorsement that the Committee should get written the history of the Gurdwara Reform Movement afresh. At S. Amar Singh’s recommendation it was decided to entrust this work to Sri Darbar Sahib Committee for necessary action. Giani Kartar Singh told the house that due to paucity of funds, SGPC could not for some time undertake that work. Therefore, this resolution should be forwarded to Sri Darbar Sahib Committee after recommendation. Sri Darbar Sahib Committee had already reserved some funds for the purpose so it was unanimously resolved that the resolution was forwarded to Sri Darbar Sahib Committee.

He further said with emphasis that the following things should also be incorporated in the programme: (i) The same Rauh Reet should be observed in all the gurdwaras; (ii) The historical gurdwaras where Sangats were in small number should be properly looked after; (iii) The history of each gurdwara should be got written and printed so that the visitors could get full information about the concerned gurdwara; and (iv) Pucca roads should be constructed up to Sri Anandpur Sahib.

100 Proceedings of the General Meeting of the SGPC, dated November 30, 1940, Reference Section, Library SGPC, Sri Amritsar; The Tribune, December 1and 3, 1940.
101 Ibid.
102 Ibid.
103 Ibid.
This very meeting adopted another resolution for the help and release of the soldiers of the Indian National Army. The following resolution was presented by Jathedar Udham Singh: “This general meeting of SGPC records its appreciation for the help of rupees 5,000 given by the Executive Council out of the Shiromani Committees charitable fund for pleading the cases of the Indian National Army and resolves that the amount be raised to rupees 7000/-. At the same time the meeting strongly urges the Government of India not to file cases against these soldiers but to release them immediately.” This meeting of the Shiromani Committee demanded that if there were any other prisoners in Indore Jail or any other Jail, they should also be released. Those soldiers of Indian National Army who had been released outside the country should be immediately brought back to India”.

The resolution was unanimously passed after endorsement by Sant Prem Singh and strongly supported by Giani Kartar Singh and S. Sardul Singh. On June 10, 1948, a sum of rupees 7000 was sanctioned to be sent for providing Kachhchras, Dastars, Soap, oil, combs etc. to the refugees of Kashmir and the suffering Sikh prisoners in West Punjab Jails, through resolution No. 283, passed in SGPC general meeting. A sub-Committee was constituted of 5 prominent Sikhs, who were also the member of the SGPC, to get the complaints and grievances of the Sikh employees in India and to redress to their satisfaction. Through Resolution No. 3182, rupees 5000 were given as relief fund to the refugees of Kashmir and rupees 5000 to those of Poonch. It was also resolved that the next of the relatives of the Gurdwara

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104 Ibid; File No. 5/46-1945, Home Political, GOI concerning Punjab, Week ending October, 1945; also Home Political File No. 18/11-1945, also see Fortnight ending October 30, 1940.
Sewadars in West Punjab who lost their lives while performing their duties, should be given substantial help as salons.\textsuperscript{105}

Demands were being made since long that the SGPC should set up a press for the error free printing of Gur Shiromani and Gurmat literature. It had thus decided to fulfill this demand and set up the press. A small machine had already been purchased. Another big machine would soon be purchased and the press be started in order to produce flawless printing of the Gur Shiromani and other religious literature pertaining to the Sikh religion. Secondly, the question of state language had assumed great significance in those days owing to several political considerations which left impact on the state Government. As a result a large number of people decided to go to Punjab, because their religion and culture were closely linked with this question since most of their religious scriptures were in their mother tongue. The Sangats had been, from time to time, drawing the attention of the SGPC to this vital question; therefore it had allotted sum of rupees 700 from its Panthik Bhalai Fund to the Sabha of Punjabi speaking people to address this important question.\textsuperscript{106}

A general meeting of the SGPC held on March 7, 1960, decided after detailed deliberations that (i) Suitable action should be taken after proper enquiry against those employees of the gurdwara of, Dharam Parchar Committees and the concerned Ashrams, who instead of performing the duties assigned to them, carried on open propaganda in favour of the previous ruling groups. However, this was not allowed by the SGPC. It decided to take appropriate action against them. It was also decided that due

\textsuperscript{105} Proceeding of the General Meeting of the SGPC dated June 10, 1948.
\textsuperscript{106} Ibid.
punishment should be given after proper enquiry to those employees who, with the intention of illegal, occupying Gurdwara Sis Ganj Sahib, Gurdwara Bangla Sahib, and other Gurdwaras of Delhi attacked the Gurdwaras and indulged in condemnable activities. They showed disrespect to Gurdwaras. They breached Gurdwara discipline and brought bad name to SGPC. Enquiries should be held against those employees of the gurdwaras of Schedule 25, Dharam Parchar Committee and the concerned Ashrams, who had been given undue promotions over and above the due annual increments in their grades, or given higher grades and positions, or illegally confirmed and given more concessions, allowances and other undue benefits. All these decisions should be set aside; they should be recovered and proper action should be taken against such officers and employees.

1. All those employees who were recruited by the ruling group in contravention to the earlier decisions, rules and conventions without any consideration or merit, only to serve the interests of their group by creating extra posts in order to give undue benefits out of gurdwara funds, should be immediately dismissed. Amount given to them, as salaries, allowances etc. should be recovered and legal action should be taken against guilty persons. Enquiries should be held against those employees who were employed by the ruling group, after being convicted of various charges and used for party propaganda against the interest of gurdwaras. They should be immediately dismissed and action should be initiated as above.


108 Ibid.

109 Ibid.
2. Similarly enquiries should be held against those members of the ruling group who had unduly been fitted their favorite persons by deliberately letting gurdwara properties at low rents without inviting tenders according to prevailing customs or by unnecessarily purchasing new properties much above market rates, thus causing heavy loss to gurdwara funds. Action should be taken against persons responsible for this recurring loss.\textsuperscript{110}

3. Some members of the ruling group have misused Gurdwara funds by giving educational help, loans, etc to ‘patits’ and non-believers in Sikh religion against the existing rules and traditions of the SGPC. Proper enquiries should be conducted in the matter and suitable action should be taken to recover the amounts thus disbursed.\textsuperscript{111}

4. During the last days of its term, the previous Committee unnecessarily disbanded the Committee of Sri Guru Tegh Bahadur Khalsa High School, Baba Bakala and formed a new Committee of incapable persons of their choice. It might cause a severe damage to the school reputation. Therefore, the Committee should take immediate steps to form a new Committee of competent persons, so that the school could further develop.\textsuperscript{112}

Thereafter, S Gurcharan Singh presented a resolution about the ‘Deras’ of Pepsu (Patiala). It read ‘There is a general talk that when the gurdwaras of Pepsu came under SGPC through an amendment in the

\textsuperscript{110} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{111} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{112} Ibid.
Gurdwara Act, the previous ruling group deliberately got some gurdwaras excluded from the Act in collusion with their mahants leaving to them their property which caused a heavy loss to the Committee. This general meeting of the SGPC directs the core Committee to hold enquiries in the matter, initiate actions against the persons responsible for this loss and make efforts to bring under Parbandhik control, the property of the gurdwara. Another resolution was passed demanding that the properties left behind by Muslim Bodies be given to the Shiromani Committee as a compensation for the gurdwara properties left in Pakistan. However, the Government did not accept the demand. So, the SGPC felt concerned and expressed unhappiness on government’s decision.

In the meeting of November 18, 1966, the SGPC expressed deep pain at the ban imposed by the Punjab Government on holding Sikh Dharmik Diwan at gurdwara Singh Sabha, Grain Market, Ambala at Bawan Duadshi Fair. This Diwan had been held on Bawan Duadshi for many years and the SGPC had been writing to the Government in this matter for a long time but the Government was adamant and imposed ban on this Diwan every year. It was openly violating Indian Constitution by encouraging Hindu Communalism by holding gathering with Police help. This general meeting of SGPC strongly condemned this one sided policy of the Government. It asserted that that ban was totally unjust especially when it allowed every party to hold Diwans and gatherings during the Jor Melas at Sikh religious places like Takht Sri Kesgarh Sahib, Gurdwara Sri Baba Balaknath; Sri Darbar Sahib Amritsar, Mukatsar Sahib, etc. The meeting

113 Ibid; The Tribune, March 14, 1960.
strongly demanded that the Government should immediately withdraw that ban. Then a resolution was passed declaring Damdama Sahib Talwandi Sabo, (Bathinda) the Fifth Takht of Guru Khalsa. It was recommended that the Jathedar of Damdama Sahib be deemed member of SGPC in the Gurdwara Act so that there was no legal hurdle in future.\textsuperscript{116}

Another resolution in connection with the restriction imposed by the British Transport Company on the use of turbans by the Sikhs was a matter of serious concern and regret. The meeting of the SGPC expressed strong resentment against that. The English were not ignorant of the religious ‘Roah Reet’ of the Sikhs. They knew that turban was a religious symbol of the Sikhs and any restriction on it was unbearable to them. It was sad that despite knowing that, they had imposed that restriction. This meeting drew the Indian government’s attention to this issue. It demanded that it should hold talks at the High commissioner’s level and got the restrictions removed by the British Government.\textsuperscript{117} In a brief speech, Giani Bhupinder Singh pointed out that grave injustice had been done to the Sikhs by cleverly excluding Bhakhra Dam, Chandigarh and some Punjabi speaking areas from the Punjabi Suba formed after so many sacrifices made by them. The Central Government should have immediately handed over these areas to Punjab without putting forward any excuses. So, a resolution in this connection was passed and forwarded in the form of demand charter to the centre government.\textsuperscript{118} This general meeting of the SGPC firmly demanded that the Governments of Jammu-Kashmir, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh and Rajasthan should assign a suitable place to Punjabi in these states and make

\textsuperscript{116} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{117} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{118} Ibid.
special arrangements to teach it in schools and Colleges because Lakhs of Punjabi-speaking people lived there.\textsuperscript{119} It was made clear that was a just demand which should be accepted without any further delay. Also it demanded from the Government that registration deeds of the lands leased by Dera Mahants for long terms should be cancelled and they should be prevented from leasing lands in future. Receivers should be appointed for those religious places for whose take-over the SGPC was fighting legal cases so that their properties were not disposed of by unfair means.\textsuperscript{120}

In the general meeting of the SGPC held on November 26, 1970, a resolution was presented by S. Baldev Singh Mahilpuri which expressed deep sympathy with the Pakistan Government, the flood victims and their families at the heavy destructions caused by the terrible sea waves which had killed or rendered homeless lakhs of people. It urged the Pakistan Government to give rupees 5 Lakhs as aid to flood victims on behalf of the SGPC out of the income of Pakistan Gurdwaras which was in their trust. During his pilgrimage, Jathedar Mohan Singh Tur, state Minister Punjab, Member Shiromani Committee got information that some local officials created hurdles in the construction work undertaken by Sant Gurmukh Singh to set up memorial for Sri Guru Hargobind Sahib, Bandi Chhor at Gwalior Fort. It was placed before the Executive Council in its meeting of November 25, 1970. After thinking over the matter, this meeting of the SGPC had set up a Committee consisting of, S. Gurcharan Singh Tohra, S. Pritam Singh Srinh, S. Surjan Singh, Ludhiana, S. Kartar Singh Takkar and Karnail Singh Pakka to visit Gwalior, and meet the Chief Minister of Madhya Pardesh and

\textsuperscript{119} \textit{Ibid; The Tribune}, February 24, 25, 1969.
\textsuperscript{120} \textit{Ibid; The Tribune}, February 27,28, 1969.
other concerned officials in connection with the construction of the memorial and resolve the matter.\textsuperscript{121}

Also S. Jiwan Singh Umarangangal presented a resolution about the freedom struggle of Bangla Desh. The meeting viewed with great concerns the atrocities, carnage and massacre being perpetrated by the West Pakistan on the unarmed and innocent people of Bangla Desh. In this age of culture and civilization, this kind of barbarous attitude and policy as well as oppression was indeed a dark blot on the fair face of religion, justice and freedom. Every justice loving country man and freedom-loving Qaum should have condemned that. The meeting heartily applauded the people of Bangla Desh who were valiantly fighting for self-defense and for the cause of freedom. Undoubtedly, the freedom movement of Bangala Desh added a new chapter of the complete unity, dedication and spirit of sacrifice of the Bangla people to the history of freedom movements.\textsuperscript{122} It also appealed to the Indian Government and the governments of other countries to help the freedom fighters of Bangla Desh in every possible manner and prevent this bloodshed for the safety of mankind. They should make efforts to create an atmosphere of peace. It too appealed to all the fellow citizens and especially to the Sikhs living in different states and countries for financial help to the people of Bangla Desh.\textsuperscript{123} At the same time it appealed to the rulers of Pakistan to settle all disputes through negotiations with the elected leader of the people and Pakistan nominated Prime Minister, Sheikh Mujib-ur-Rehman in an atmosphere of peace and desist from the use of force and

\textsuperscript{122} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{123} Ibid.
oppression.\textsuperscript{124} It also advised the Indian Government to be completely vigilant and ready for the defense of India’s borders.\textsuperscript{125}

In the light of the demand made by S. Gurcharan Singh Tohra, President SGPC letter No 23165 dated October 8, 1974, the meeting strongly urged the central Government to ask the Government of England to hand over the ‘Asthis’ of Maharaja Dalip Singh to Punjab so that the ‘Sanskar’ of the ‘Asthis’ of the Maharaja who was deprived of his crown and throne, could be performed according to Sikh rites as desired by him.\textsuperscript{126} In another general meeting of the SGPC held on March 30, 1975, it strongly denounced (i) Haryana Government’s act of applying ceiling law on gurdwara lands because the income from the lands of historical gurdwaras was spent on Langars, Education, orphans’ look after and other acts of public welfare. Gurdwara properties should therefore be kept out of the preview of the Ceiling Act. The meeting appeals to the Central Government to use its influence to persuade Haryana Government to exempt gurdwara lands from the application of ceiling laws;\textsuperscript{127} and (ii) This general meeting of SGPC thought it necessary to make that clear to the Congress Government at the centre that the Sikh Gurdwara Act secured by it from the British Government by making countless physical and financial sacrifices, therefore, no amendment should be made in the Sikh Gurdwara Act, 1925. Immediate elections should be held without breaking up the Committee as Shiromani Committee had been repeatedly demanding it since 1969.\textsuperscript{128}

\textsuperscript{124} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{125} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{126} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{127} Proceedings of the General Meeting of the SGPC, dated March 30, 1975, Reference Section, Library SGPC, Sri Amritsar
\textsuperscript{128} Ibid.
Another resolution was passed to stop the propaganda carried on by some communal miscreants after a patient suicide in the Amrit Sarovar. After that a resolution was passed asking improvement Trust, Amritsar to formulate and implement a new scheme providing approach road to Gurdwara Guru ke Mahal. After that, a resolution was passed asking British government in England to exempt Sikh living there from the legal restriction of wearing a helmet on their turbans while riding a motor cycle. Its copies were sent to the Punjab Government, the Central Government and the British Government for their kind consideration.

The general meeting of the SGPC held on February 28, 1976 was deeply concerned to know that the Government of Maharashtra was bent on making amendments in the Act concerning Sri Hazoor Sahib, the central religious place of the Sikhs and one of the five Takhts. By doing so, it desired to reduce Shiromani Committee’s representation and induct non-Sikh elements and stooges of the Government into the Board. It strongly condemned that proposed act of the Maharashtra Government.

It is pertinent to mention that the works in various walks of life carried out by the SGPC show its character and nature. Its achievements and contribution made from time to time give special credit to this supreme body of the Sikhs it worked for the identity as well as evolution of the institutions of the Sikh community and Sikhism. Though when constituted it was made clear that this body would manage the Sikh Gurdwaras, but it, soon after its formation, realized its duty towards its community, the province of Punjab.

129 Ibid.
130 Ibid.
and also to the country. Though it happens to be an institution in itself, yet it represents the whole Sikh community.

Hence, it becomes clear that whenever anything happened against the principles of Sikhism or anything harmed the existence and identity of the Sikh community and their religion, the SGPC was seen on the forefront to protect and safeguard the Sikhs as well as Sikhism.