

Sikhs Abroad: Early Migrants

Dr. Beant Singh Ji Mehar (SR: Sept. 2008) has mentioned under the heading of "First Gurdwara in Canada" that "On January 19th, 1908 the first Gurdwara Sahib in Canada was officially opened at 1866 W.

Second Avenue
, Vancouver, BC."

While traveling on Canada's Highway, 1 (through Western Canada) some years back, I came across an official road side sign, on a vista point (about 100-200 miles?) West of Calgary, marking the access road to a small town, Golden, in British Columbia. It notifies the visitors about the history of the town, inter-alia, **describing the first Sikh Gurdwara Sahib that was established in the town in early 1880s by the Sikh workers of the Saw Mill.**

In order to enhance my information, I came across a 400 page book, HISTORY OF CANADIAN SIKHS (1880-2000) in the bazaars of Vancouver. This book has been written by 'Sohan Sarinder Singh Sanga Sakrulvi' published in 1999 by Khalsa Diwan Society Vancouver, Canada. On page 60 of this book, Mr. Ray Hundle, who researched the history and records written by Heather Miller about the town of Golden at Golden Museum, states the following: "A priest whose name was MacRay, head of the Presbyterian Church, was united by the Golden Sikh Temple. He spoke in his own words about the "Hindus", how they lived and worshipped when they built the first Sikh Temple in Golden in 1880. There is also official proof that there was a 'Sikh Temple' from 1880 to 1927. At that time there was a big fire. Then our people moved towards the West coast."

If the statements made in this voluminous book of Sardar Sanga Sakrulvi on the HISTORY OF CANADIAN SIKHS (published by Khalsa Diwan Society Vancouver) has to be believed, it seems to contradict the author of this article 'Sikh abroad: Early Migrants.' Surely, there is need for the historians interested in Canadian Sikh history to look further and help us discover the Truth.

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Let us Empower Akal Takht Sahib: in God's Name!

The Octoberr issue ran three articles on "Akal Takht Sahib" including one by Canada's distinguished Jagpal Singh Tiwana: "Sikhs need a strong central authority". He is absolutely right. Ours is a religion based on bhakti and shakti - in that order. Therefore, 'intelligence' alone is not enough for such a momentous cause. Fortunately, we have a post-graduate Sant in true sense, Baba Iqbal Singh (Baru Sahib) to lead the community diplomatically and peacefully alongwith DGPS Pasricha, Maj. Gen. R.S. Chhatwal. (B. Sahib) and the likes from over. I am sure that by the grace of the Guru the concerned Gurusikhs like you can achieve the goal in the next five years.

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I have read with great interest the article "A Plea for Reforms in SGPC" by Sardar Prithipal Singh Kapur published in May 2008 issue.

I am in total agreement with the views expressed therein with regard to the urgent necessity for reforms in the functioning of SGPC - and, in particular, the absolute desirability of avoiding political interference.

Historically, the SGPC was created to be the apex body for the management of the historical gurdwaras in the Punjab, which had been 'liberated' from the control of the decadent mahants. The Shiromani Akal Dal was to be the executive (temporal) arm of the committee working under its overall direction in order to maintain the supremacy of 'Piri' (spiritual attainment) over 'Miri' (temporal action).

Regrettably, the SGPC itself has become decadent - if not retrograde - and certainly requires a Gurdwara Reform Committee or any other body of right thinking and motivated Sikhs to undo the plethora of unethical practices that have crept into the body, mainly due to the inherently vicious process of election, on a "democratically" elected "one-man-one-vote" basis.

Such apex ecclesiastical bodies need to be constituted more on the basis of selection by a committee of individuals with proven record of religious fervour and desire for service to the global community. Only then can the affairs of the SGPC be shorn of political interference.

This matter has been engaging the serious attention of a large number of prominent well-meaning, objective and concerned Sikh individuals. Perhaps, a simple step in the right direction could be an insertion of affirmation in the application form for election to the SGPC, which should state that **"I solemnly declare that I shall not stand for any political office during my tenure on the committee and for a period of five years thereafter."** This would certainly discourage a large majority of present day aspirants!

Reverting to the reform of SGPC Act, I can do no better than refer to an article written by an eminent Sikh intellectual and well wisher, Dr. Jaswant Singh Neki, which appeared in the journal, Nishaan Vol II/2003. With his permission, I am taking the liberty of sending you a copy of the issue, including the article (pages 8 to 11) with a request for publication of the same in your esteemed magazine. Perhaps, this will tickle the imagination of well meaning sections of the community.

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