

## **Inordinate Delay in the SGPC General Election**

**Matter raised under Rule 377 of Parliament, by S. Simranjit Singh Mann,  
M.P.**

After the reorganisation of states on linguistic basis, in 1966, the Sikh Gurdwara Act, 1925, became an inter-state Act and the home ministry of the Government of India has been dealing with it since then. Elections to the SGPC were held in 1996 after 17 years, and in 1979 they were held after 14 years. Since 1966, all amendments — substantive and procedural - have been carried out by the ministry of home affairs simply by a notification of the MHA, in consultation with the SGPC.

The Executive Committee and the general house of the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee, the highest decision-making body of the Sikhs, has passed a number of resolutions for holding General elections to the House, from time to time, which have been sent to the government of India.

The general will of the Sikh people resides in the S.G.P.C., the Sikh parliament. Governance and management of Sikh Gurdwaras is an internal matter of the Sikh and the role of the government is to conduct free and fair elections. The popular will of the Sikhs, as expressed by resolutions of the SGPC, are the yardsticks to be followed by the Ministry of Home Affairs. As per the provisions of the Act, the elections are to be held after every five years. The term of the present committee was over in September 2001, but elections have not been held so far. Therefore, I demand that:

- The elections to the SGPC should be held without delay.
- Appropriate amendment must be made in the Sikh Gurdwara Act, 1925 to make elections after every five years mandatory.

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## **Sikhs in N. America launch Guru Granth Quatercentennial**

Sikh scholars from North America and India gathered in New York, last July, to promote dissemination of Guru Granth's message in global society, at a two-day conference sponsored by Gurdwara Baba Makhan Shah Lubana Sikh Center. The conference began with a prayer on July 26; there were five sessions on that day. The conference continued on July 27 after the regular Sunday service, and concluded with a prayer. Lectures, slide demonstrations, singing of holy hymns and free discussions formed the proceedings. It was decided that celebratory session be held in March 2004.

The Center president, Sr. Raghbir Singh, welcomed the speakers, delegates and the audience He announced that it was the first of many conferences in Greater New York City in preparation for celebrating the forthcoming Quad-Centennial Celebration of installation of the Aadi Granth by Guru Arjun in 1604, and the Tercentennial of the *Gurgaddi* of Guru Granth as "Guru in perpetuity" of the Sikhs.

Sr. Charanjiv Singh Puri, started the first academic session after singing of the holy hymns by the *gurdwara* cantors. Harsimrat Kaur then recited a hymn from the

Guru Granth, which she translated and also sang in Hebrew, Spanish and Chinese. She announced that those translations were underway. She exhibited the hymn of Jap Ji translated in Hebrew.

Harsimran Singh described a mission set to present Sikhism to American neighbors. He illustrated the relevance and urgency of the Sikh way of life in modern times. Harbhajan Singh Anand spoke on the universal kinship propagated by the teachings of Guru Granth. Dr. Sangat Singh Syalee spoke on one God and one humanity principles of Sikh religion.

Rabinder Singh Bhanwra spoke of relevance of meditation for the modern society. Dr. Gurcharan Singh of City University presented a paper on the nature of eternal truths manifested in the Guru Granth that needed attention of the modern society.

Dr. Devinder Singh Chahal, President of the Institute of Understanding Sikhism, Montreal, described the concept of religious preceptor in Sikhism. He emphasized on the logical and scientific deliberations of the teachings of the Guru Granth. He also illustrated examples where a theology not based only on the Guru Granth teachings can lead to wrong conclusions because a lot of history needs to be authenticated.

Bhai Harbans Lal, President of the Academy of Guru Granth Studies, described the loving care with which Guru Granth was compiled, suggesting that the Granth was meant for whole humanity; its teachings worthy of practice in daily living, its moral values valid foremerging global society. He emphasized that Sikhs must demonstrate the personal utility of living according to the teachings of the Granth.

Sr. Pritam Singh, General Secretary of the Gurudwara while opening the second phase of the conference asked for the ideas effective in guarding against the propaganda of anti-Sikh groups.

Sr. Baldeep Singh, a renowned artist of Sikh music from New Delhi, gave many illustrations to emphasize that the traditional Sikh music was an excellent medium to connect to and promote the Guru Granth teachings in the emerging society. He recounted the history and nature of classical Sikh music. There were many efforts recently undertaken to preserve the traditions and conventions of singing the Guru Granth hymns. He being the recipient of Delhi State Award for Outstanding Music Artist was congratulated.

The noted author Dr. Surjit Kaur, and New York-based attorney Jasleen Kaur, highlighted the place and role of Sikh women in practicing and mobilizing the community sources for propagation of Sikh values.

Dr. Shivinder Kaur Johl from India described her memories of the days when the seal-of-Sikh- Faith ceremony, traditionally known as *gurcharanee lagna* was popular among Sikh populations of northern India. She urged revival of that custom to motivate Sikh youth for Guru Granth studies. Every Sikh must be able to communicate with Guru Granth directly, she said.

Sr. Bhupinder Singh, the scholar missionary, emphasized modernization of Gurmukhi vernacular for the presentation of Guru Granth teachings for any impact on the global society. He gave examples where the hymns were re-translated to

improve communication with the citizens of global society. Pritpal Singh spoke on the meaning of Sikh congregations in today's busy life.

Jaidev Singh spoke on Sikh symbols and described how enthused he felt as a Sikh. Others who spoke included Kirpal Singh, Manjit Singh, Kanwal Amrik Singh, Dhan Singh and Amarjit Singh.

On July 27, the conference was combined with the congregational services. Intermittent with singing of holy hymns, over half a dozen speakers made their presentation. Dr. Shivinder Kaur spoke on the importance of mother tongue in disseminating the Guru Granth teachings.

Bhai Harbans Lal in his concluding remarks, spoke on the features which made the Guru Granth teachings a unique asset for the society. Its possession is a unique privilege of the Sikhs, he said. This privilege made them custodians of a unique treasure that they were committed to share with the world. He further emphasized that the method of exegeses was a unique religious tradition through which Sikhs approach to translating the Guru Granth. Literal translations do not do justice to the Guru Granth theology, he concluded.

After the vote of thanks, the speakers of the July 26 conference were honored by presentation of mementos. Bhai Harbans Lal and Dr. Shivinder Kaur were given Sikh *siropa* or robes of honor on behalf of the Bhai Makhan Singh Gurdwara Committee during the July 27 session, with *jaikaraas* from the congregation.

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## **International Conference on Sri Guru Granth Sahib**

On December 2-5, 2003, eminent scholars of world religions will make presentations and lead discussion on the teachings of the Guru Granth. International delegates to the New Delhi meeting of the Parliament of World Religions are being invited to participate.

The theme of the conference will be "**Guru Granth and the Interfaith Understanding to World Peace.**" All presentations will reflect the universal consciousness for peace as contained in Sri Guru Granth Sahib.

The Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar, is sponsoring this Conference towards the Centennial celebrations of the Year 2004 to commemorate the first installation of the Granth by Guru Arjun in 1604, and year 1708 when Guru Gobind Singh canonized and installed the Guru Granth as the Eternal Guru.

The purpose of the Conference is to arouse awareness on the global relevance of the Guru Granth teachings and build momentum towards celebration of forthcoming Guru Granth Centennials in 2004 and 2008. The Conference Proceedings will be published in the newly launched journal, "Perspectives on Guru Granth."

The organizers are inviting high ranking academics from all over the world. Those who wish to present papers and participate in discussions may write to the undersigned for further information. Those who need official invitations to support travel arrangements may also write to the undersigned:

Professor Balwant Singh Dhillon, Conference Director

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Amritsar - 143 005 (Punjab)  
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## World's Best Tourist Spots

Is the Taj losing its lustre? India's best known tourist halt was ranked 10th in a poll of the world's must-see sights, losing out to **Amritsar's Golden Temple**, which was voted at No. 6. The poll, conducted by BBC's popular *Holiday* programme, asked viewers to rank the places to see before dying.

The top 10 in pecking order were: the Grand Canyon, the Great Barrier Reef, Florida, South Island, Cape Town, **Golden Temple**, Las Vegas, Sydney, New York and the Taj Mahal. Other popular destinations were the Pyramids in Egypt, Great Wall of China, Paris and Venice. Asian sights were Bali, Bangkok, Singapore, Sri Lanka and the Maldives. Also in the list were the Masai mara Game Reserve, Ayers Rock, Chichen Itza, the Terracotta Army in China and Yosemite National Park in America.

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## Gujarat Sikh Pratinidhi Board

To rejuvenate the emancipated nation, Guru Govind Singhji infused a new spirit by creating Khalsa on the historic Baisakhi day 1699 AD by giving a call to the assembled people at Anandpur to come forward to offer for sacrifice, and five offered their heads and they were baptized by the Guru and declared them to be Khalsa. Out of these five, one person, namely, Mohkam Chand from Dwarka, Gujarat, was baptized along with other four and named as *Panj Pyaras*, and each one was given a suffix of Singh and hence Mohkam Chand became Bhai Mohkam Singh.

In memory of Bhai Mohkam Singh, the *sangat* of Gujarat has acquired his place of birth after long search from Govt's records and proposes to build a Gurdwara. Accordingly a function was held on 25/02/03 and foundation stone was laid and building work started. Apart from persons representing Gurdwaras from Gujarat, Prof. Manjit Singh Jathedar, Kesgarh Sahib attended. It was most appropriate that the Jathedar of Kesgarh must associate with the Gurdwara since the *Panch Piaras* were created at Kesgarh Sahib. Baba Lakha Singh undertook the *Kar Sewa* of this Gurdwara.

According to history books, it is sated that Bhai Mohkam Singh was from Drwarka. But the actual place of his is Bet-Dwarka, which is 30 km away from Dwarka, at the edge of sea. To reach Bet Dwarka, one has to travel to Okha and then, by motorboat, one will go to other end and reach Bet Dwarka. Okha is connected with rail and is the last railway station of Ahmedabad, Rajkot, Jamnagar, Dwarka and there is direct train from Jamm Tavi to Okha, apart from other trains from Ahmedabad.

Bet Dwarka has a population of about 10,000, mostly inhabited by Muslims apart from Hindus, with almost no Sikh population although there are a couple of Sikh families at Dwarka and have a gurdwara too.

(Mohinder Singh, B.E.)

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## **Kirpan allowed in Domestic Flights**

**Bureau of Civil Aviation Security, Govt. of India**

Circular No. 34/2002

It has been brought to notice of this Bureau that instructions pertaining to carriage of Kirpan by Sikh passengers of domestic flights are not properly implemented, resulting in inconvenience to the Sikh passengers.

In view of the above it is further clarified that, as per instructions in force issued vide Circular No. 9.56/74-IR dated 7.10.1983 (annexure-I) which were reiterated vide Circular No. 8/99 dated 28.4.99 (annexure-II) Sikh passengers are allowed to carry Kirpan with them on board domestic flights. The total length of the 'Kirpan' should not exceed 22.86 cms (9 inches) and the length of the blade should not exceed 15.24 cms (6 inches). It is being reiterated that these instructions should be fully implemented by concerned security personnel so that religious sentiments of the Sikh passengers are not hurt.

(R.K. Singh)

Addl Commissioner of Security (CA)

**[Courtesy: Sr. Tarlochan Singh,  
Chairman, NCM, New Delhi. 110 003]**

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## **Cremation of Aged Birs: An extraordinary Spectacle**

In course of my visit to Ludhiana, I was a witness to how old *Birs* of Sri Guru Granth Sahib are cremated. Hence the following report is sent for publication, so that gurdwara managements at other place can get inspiration, knowledge, etc.

As per Sikh code of conduct (*Rehat maryada*) the aged *Birs* of Sri Guru Granth Sahib should be cremated with full honour and regard, since Guru Granth Sahib, is a living guru.

Gurdwara Sri Guru Granth Sahib, at Chhoti Javadi, Ludhiana, had been collecting aged *Birs* and respectfully placing them in a special room on specially built platforms covered with spotless white sheets.

On first and third Sunday of every month, these *Birs* are brought out in a procession led by five Amritdhari Sighs and taken to Angitha Sahib (specially built five chambers with chimneys) and after offering *Ardas*. These *Birs* are immersed with pure ghee and lit with ghee immersed stick. The residue is consigned to river.

The selfless service is being carried out by the main sewak, Bhai Sahib Narinder Singh Ji, with his dedicated team members apart from above *sewa*, Bhai Sahib

motivates the *sangat* to observe Sikh Rehat Maryada; in particular not to indulge in hair trimming or shaving. It is claimed that countless persons have responded to his persuasive appeal.

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## **Nishkam Scholarship to students studying Sikhism in Madurai Kamaraj University**

The New Delhi-based Sikh Philanthropic organization, Nishkam Sikh Welfare Council, has awarded Rs. 30,000 as scholarship to ten students who had completed the P.G. Diploma in Sikhism and Comparative Religion, conducted by Guru Nanak Devji Chair, Madurai Kamaraj University.

Prof. Dr. P.K. Ponnuswamy, Vice-Chancellor, Madurai Kamaraj University, distributed the scholarship cheques (Rs. 3,000 each) to the students on 5th may 2003. The Vice-Chancellor advised the students to learn the work-discipline and the humanist ethics of the Sikhs. Mr. A.S. Bamrah, Vice-President, Coats Vyella Industries participated in the programme and congratulated the students.

The following are the title of the Diploma projects done by the students.

1. S. Pushpalatha - Sri Guru Granth Sahib - Rag Gauri - translation
2. S. Krishnakumari - Guru Nanak and Lekraj - A Comparative Study
3. S. Malarvizhi - Sri Guru Granth Sahib - Rag Sri - translation
4. A. Dharmar - The Life and Politics of Maharaja Ranjit Singh
5. R Gorijan - Baba Sheikh Farid: Life and Thought
6. K. Shobana - Dr. Balbir Singh - Life and Thought
7. K. Vijayalakshmi - Sri Guru Granth Sahib - Asa-di-Var- translation
8. S. Prema - Modern Punjabi Poetry
9. S. Saravanam - Sri Guru Granth Sahib Baramaha - translation
10. V. Shanthi - Sri Guru Granth Sahib Rag Majh - translation

Dr. N. Muthu Mohan, Head, Guru Nanak Devji Chair thanked the Nishkam Sikh Welfare Council and the participants of the programme.

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