



The Organisational Set up of The Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee in Akali Movement

*The Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (S.G.P.C) which is known as the 'parliament of Sikhs' is the result of Gurdwara Reform Movement 1920 to 1925. The management of the Gurdwaras and misuse of their property by the mahants became the main cause of the Gurdwara reform movement. Peaceful agitation was adopted by S.G.P.C. as a weapon to fight against the mahants and the government. The S.G.P.C. organized the whole movement and sent Akali Jathas to various historical Gurdwaras to liberate them. True spirit of non-violence of Akalis was most striking feature of the Gurdwara reform movement. During their peaceful and non-violent agitation, they had to bear physical torture and even death by the mahants backed by the British Government. Despite the opposition the Akalis ultimately succeeded in achieving their goal. The successful agitations compelled the British Government to legislate for the management of the Sikh Gurdwaras. The movement came to an end after an Act known as Sikh Gurdwara Act, 1925 (Punjab Act-VIII of 1925) was passed by the Punjab Legislative Council. This act gave the S.G.P.C. supreme control over two hundred important historical Gurdwaras. The formation of Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee has occupied a very important place in the Sikh history as well as in the regional and national history. **Key Words** : S.G.P.C., Akali, Government, Gurdwara.*

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A Hukamanama was issued from the Akal Takhat summoning a general assembly of the Sikhs to meet on 15th November 1920, in front of the Akal Takht for the purpose of electing a representative committee of the Panth to control the Golden Temple and all other Gurdwaras. The condition to be satisfied by each delegate from different bodies were (1) he must have received Amrit or baptism (2) he must be a regular reader of the scriptures (3) he must possess the five 'K's (4) Must be an early riser and (5) he must be giving 1/10th of his income regularly for the Panthic cause. The representatives were regulated as follows in Table.

The General Assembly was planned on 15th -16th November, 1920. It was attended by over 10,000 Sikh representatives from all over the country. Two days before the meeting was held the government hastened to appoint a managing committee. It expressed its disapproval of the thirty six members advisory committee appointed by the government on the ground that its members were nominated by the government without reference to Panth. The assembly elected bigger committee of its own consisting of one hundred seventy five members and named it as 'The Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee' (S.G.P.C). To

1. Four Takhts 6 representatives each
2. Gurdwara 1 representatives for 100 members each.
3. Sikh Association- 5 representatives for 100 members each.

		Managing Committee	Staff	Students
4	Khalsa College, Amritsar	1	2	2
5	G.N. College Gujranwala	1	2	2
6	Akali College, Mastuana	1	2	2
7	High Schools	1	1	1 each
8	Middle Schools	1	1	1 each
9	Primary Schools	1	1	1 each
10	Sikh States	-	-	5 each
11	Mixed Sikh Cavalries	-	-	2 each
12	Mixed Sikh Regiments	-	-	2 each
13	Purely Sikh Cavalries	-	-	5 each
14	Purely Sikh Regiments	-	-	5 each
15	Nihang Jathas	-	-	5 each for every 100 members ¹

avoid any controversy with the moderates, all the thirty members of the earlier official committee were included in the enlarged one.⁽²⁾ The first meeting of S.G.P.C. was held at the Akal Takhat on 12th December, 1920 and Sunder

Singh Majithia was elected the first president and Sunder Singh Ramgarhia, earlier Sarbarah of Akal Takht, as secretary. In the same meeting a sub-committee of 72 members was appointed to prepare the rules and regulations for the administration of the Gurdwaras and to draft a constitution for the newly formed S.G.P.C.⁽³⁾ Soon after the formation of S.G.P.C. its military wing the Shiromani Akali Dal was formed by uniting the local Akali Jathas under one central body in order to intensify the Gurdwara struggle against the Mahants.⁽⁴⁾

The Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee was registered on 3rd April 1921. According to new constitution four-fifths of the members would be elected by different constituencies in the Punjab and outside, and the remaining 1/5 would be nominated. The different districts were apportioned a fixed number of seats on the committee according to the population and religious importance of the Sikhs residing therein. The Sikh states were also given representation. One-fourth of the whole number of seats assigned to a state were to be nominated by its Maharaja that the remaining to be elected by the Sikh population of the state. As the committee was the most important religious assembly of the Sikhs. Its business was to control Gurdwaras and determine form of worship to be observed in them. Only those were given the right of voting who could be called representative Sikhs. Every Sikh, who was not less than 21 years old and who observed the elementary rules of Sikh conduct, such as rising early in the morning, reading the scripture, giving one-tenth of the personal income and keeping the baptismal lower, got a vote.⁽⁵⁾

In the end of 1920 the situation took a new turn. The Akali Dal Jathedars, especially Kartar Singh Jhabbar and Teja Singh of Chuharkana, renewed the earlier campaign for liberating the Gurdwaras from evil influences. Under the impact of Mahatma Gandhi's programme of non-cooperation, the religious Diwans arranged by the Akali leadership became the centers of religio-political propaganda among the rural classes of the Sikh community. Official circles noticed this sudden change with great consternation.⁽⁶⁾ The position of extremists and non-cooperators was further strengthened as a result of fresh elections to the S.G.P.C. held in July 1921. The new committee had been elected. With its representative character its influence and prestige also increased. It had a membership of 180, viz., 140 elected and 40 selected by the elected members themselves. On 27th August, the first meeting of the new S.G.P.C. was held at Akal Takht and elected the following office bearers: President-Sardar Kharak Singh, Vice-President-Sardar Sunder Singh Ramgarhai and Honorary Secretary Sarda Bahadur Mehtab Singh. A strong executive committee of 31 members was elected.⁽⁷⁾

Other nationalist organizations like the Indian National Congress, the Khilafat Party, the Central Sikh League and Muslim League also passed resolutions of

sympathy and support for the Akali cause after the Nankana tragedy. On 16th July, 1922 the following office bearers were elected President Sardar Kharak Singh (in his absence in jail Sardar Mehtab Singh, was to act of him) Vice President-Sardar Amar Singh of Jhabal and Secretary Bhai Jaswant Singh.⁽⁸⁾ The enhanced power and prestige the S.G.P.C., its hold on the Sikh masses, particularly the soldiers, pensioners and peasantry and the increasing popularity of the Akali Fauj worried the authorities both in India and in England.⁽⁹⁾ The nationalist Sikh leaders wanted a platform through which all sections of Sikh community could be appealed. The Central Sikh League was not effective among the Sikh masses. The stage of S.G.P.C. was more effective among the Sikh peasantry and they supported the non-cooperation movement adopted by the S.G.P.C. Thus many nationalist Sikh leaders started taking active part in the activities of S.G.P.C. and soon they became its driving force. There is no doubt that S.G.P.C. was not a political body but in a small community politicians and social and religious reformers easily get mixed up or even identified with each other.

Baba Kharak Singh, the new president of S.G.P.C, was well known for his staunch views. New nationalist leadership of S.G.P.C under the presidentship of Baba Kharak Singh was a source of danger for the government. It was quite obvious because of the close relationship between the Congress and reforming Sikhs. The government feared that under their leadership, the S.G.P.C might accept the whole political programme of the Indian National Congress and thus would bring the entire community into the national struggle.⁽¹⁰⁾ The Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee has throughout insisted that the Akali movement was religious and non-political and that the sole object of the formation of the Akali Dal was to secure by moral force a complete reformation of the management of all Sikh places of worship. This contention could not be lightly dismissed and required some examination.⁽¹¹⁾

An order was issued by the Home department of the government of the Punjab on 12th October 1923, declaring the S.G.P.C., the Shiromani Akali Dal and various Jathas organized by or affiliated to this body as "unlawful associations".⁽¹²⁾ In consequence the local officials carried out the mass arrests of the Akali leadership. All the sixty members of the Interim Committee of the S.G.P.C were arrested and tried for treason against the King Emperor.⁽¹³⁾ Security arrangements in Amritsar were tight ended machine-guns placed at all the main gates of the city and the army posted at important centers of Akali activities. The atmosphere was charged with tension, reminiscent of the days of martial law. To paralyse the Akali activities not only the members of the Interim committee were arrested but also the office staff.⁽¹⁴⁾ The official action did not prove an effective weapon and failed to check the activities of the Akalis. The places of those arrested were soon occupied by others and the organization continued to function

uninterrupted. The leaders in jail at Amritsar continued to be in touch with the new leaders outside though secret system of their own. All efforts to check the flow of news of the movement and secret correspondence between the leaders inside and outside proved fruitless. On receiving reports about the regular contact between the Akali leaders in and out of jails, the local government changed its earlier decision of trying these prisoners in Amritsar. The special magistrate, Mr. Henderson, shifted them to the Lahore Fort which was converted into a special jail. The judicial court inside tried these leaders under section 120, 121 -A and 17 of the Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1908 except for two important leader; Kharak Singh and Mangal Singh who were already under going various terms of imprisonment, all the remaining members of interim committee were charged with treason against the king emperor and awarded different terms of imprisonment.⁽¹⁵⁾

The authorities failed to achieve their object. A new committee of 62 members came into existence in place of the one arrested by the government on the night of 13th October .The onward march of the Akali movement continued. Contrary to the expectation of the government the new committee adopted an even more aggressive tone in its criticism of the official policy in defiance of the official order of 12th October declaring the S.G.P.C. and the Akali Jathas to be 'unlawful associations', The committee, which held a meeting of its executive on 4th November 1923, passed the following resolutions.⁽¹⁶⁾

(1) This new executive committee of the S.G.P.C. lays on record its firm conviction after careful consideration that it is the duty of every Sikh to protect these religious rights for the defence of which the S.G.P.C. and the Shiromani Akali Dal, The representative bodies of the nation, have been declared unlawful by the government. The new executive committee declares its firm and unalterable determination to uphold these rights.

(2) The new executive committee believes firmly that the government by declaring the S.G.P.C. and the Shiromani Akali Dal as unlawful has leveled a mean attack against the sacred right to association in regard to Sikh religious matters and this meeting expresses its sense of disgust at this attitude of the government.

The executive committee also condemned the official action in arresting the paid clerical staff of the S.G.P.C. and expressed its sense of disgust at the government having descended to such measures to crush the non violent S.G.P.C.⁽¹⁷⁾ The arrested second batch of 62 members of the S.G.P.C. and the Akali leaders in January 1924 signified the government's move to smash the movement. Deputy Commissioners of Amritsar, H. Puckle and the superintendent of police R.C Jeffrey, with a body of 100 armed policemen in uniform approached the Akal Takht by a back entrance through the Thara Sahib.⁽¹⁸⁾ The superintendent of police and two other British officers ordered his force (police and military) to break through

the entrance through force. On this order being given by the superintendent, the Akalis who, in the mean while, had gathered there in sufficient numbers, formed into a solid wall and occupied the entrance of Akal Takhat. The superintendent and his party tried their level best to break through. The police was pushed back by the Akalis.

According to S.G.P.C. it was for the first time that the police in uniform and with their shoes on had tried to enter the holy precincts of the Darbar Sahib. S. Jodh Singh, M.A, appeared on the scene and explained to the superintendent of police that it was impossible for them to enter Akal Takht Sahib. It was best that the authorities to submit a list of the names of the members they wished to arrest which he would present to the committee assembling for surrendering the persons, if present, to the police. The authorities seeing no other alternative possible yielded to hand over the list to S. Jodh Singh. Just when this talk was going on between professor Jodh Singh and the authorities, the latter were told by the secretary of the local Gurdwara Committee to clear out of the premises of Darbar Sahib as they were in uniform. The superintendent and his party agreed. It was about 8 'o' clock when members after finishing their work calmly came down from Akal Takhat. A few of them delivered stirring speeches advising the Sikhs to remain non-violent and united. After the Ardas (final prayer) the members went to Darbar Sahib. All 62 members were arrested without warrants and went to the Amritsar Jail.

After the arrests of the second interim committee, a third committee succeeded it. The new committee again held conference to challenge the authority of government and to defy its orders. This committee was also arrested. They were tried in the courts and awarded punishments. After thus failing to achieve their object the authorities were compelled to open fresh dialogue with the S.G.P.C. It resulted in the passage of the Sikh Gurdwaras and Shrines Bill in July 1925. The members of the Central Board elected under the provisions of the above mentioned Bill met at Town Hall in Amritsar on 2nd October 1926. They decided to name the Board as the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee. The Punjab government withdrew its order declaring the S.G.P.C. and other Akali organs "unlawful associations" and reorganized the S.G.P.C. as a representative body of the Sikhs.

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शोध-पत्र भेजने संबंधी नियम

(1) शोध-पत्र 1500-1700 शब्दों से अधिक नहीं होना चाहिए।

(2) हिन्दी एवं मराठी माध्यम के शोधपत्रों को कृतिदेव 10 (Kruti Dev 010) में टाईप करवाकर 'पेजमेकर 6.5' में भेजें।

(3) पंजाबी माध्यम के शोधपत्रों को अनमोल लिपि (AnmolLipi) या अमृत बोली (Amritboli) या जॉय (Joy) में टाईप करवाकर 'पेजमेकर 6.5' में भेजें।

(4) अंग्रेजी माध्यम के शोधपत्र टाइम्स न्यू रोमन (Times New Roman), एरियल फॉन्ट (Arial) में टाईप करवाकर 'पेजमेकर 6.5' या 'माइक्रोसाफ्ट वर्ड' में भेजे जा सकते हैं।

(4) शोधपत्र की विधि - (1) शीर्षक (2) एबस्ट्रेक्ट (3) की-वर्ड्स (5) प्रस्तावना/प्रवेश (5) उद्देश्य (6) शोध परिकल्पना (7) शोध प्रविधि एवं क्षेत्र (8) सांख्यिकीय तकनीक (9) विवेचन या विश्लेषण (10) सुझाव (11) निष्कर्ष एवं (12) संदर्भ ग्रंथ सूची।

(6) संदर्भ ग्रंथ सूची इस प्रकार दें -

For Books :

(1) Name of Writer, "Name of Book", Publication, Place of Publication, Year of Publication, Page Number/numbers.

For Journals :

(2) Name of Writer, "Title of Article", Name of Journal, Volume, Issue, Page Numbers.

Web references :

<http://utc.iath.virginia.edu/interpret/exhibits/hill/hill.html>

(7) गुजराती माध्यम के शोधपत्र हरेकृष्णा (Harekrishna), टेराफॉन्ट वरुण (Terafont Varun), टेराफॉन्ट आकाश (Terafont Aaksah) में टाईप करवाकर 'पेजमेकर 6.5' में भेजे जा सकते हैं।

(8) शोधपत्र की साफ्टकॉपी रिसर्च लिंक के ई-मेल आईडी researchlink@yahoo.co.in पर भेजने के बाद हार्डकॉपी, शोधपत्र के मौलिक होने के घोषणा पत्र के साथ हस्ताक्षर कर 'रिसर्च लिंक' के कार्यालय को प्रेषित करें।

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