

Current Sikh issues- Sikh Historical Perspective

Chapter 4-10

No concept of Sehajdhari Sikhs in Sikh religion-Either one is a Sikh or not

There is no concept of sehajdhari Sikhs in Sikh religion. Either one is a Sikh or not. Nothing in between. Sikh initiation and code of conduct is mandatory for all Sikhs. So called sehajdhari Sikhs even shorn their hairs, what to say of taking Sikh initiation and observing Sikh code of conduct. It has been held by the full bench of Punjab and Haryana High court in a recent judgment that keeping of hairs unshorn is a fundamental tenet of Sikh religion and that no sehajdhari Sikh can even become voter for SGPC elections. A resolution of SGPC passed in 1938 stated that a sehajdhari Sikh can not cut or trim the hairs on any part of the body. Infact, the moment a non Sikh decides to become a sehajdhari Sikh to gradually embrace Sikhism, he cannot think even to cut or trim the hairs, which is the basic requirement of a Sikh and his identity as otherwise his desire to become a Sikh is not genuine.

He has to keep his hair intact and then to take Sikh initiation-Amrit khande-de -pahul and observe Sikh code of conduct in that respect as prescribed by the tenth Sikh Guru to become and act as a Sikh under the Divine guidance of Guru Granth Sahib to fulfill his aspirations. Till then he remains a mere aspirant and there is a lot of distance between an aspirant and becoming a Sikh.

There are no categories in Sikhs and neither any in between category of sehajdhari Sikhs. Either one is a Sikh or not. Guru Gobind Singh prescribed the Sikh initiation of Amrit-khande de pahul for the uniformity of Sikhs to be mandatory for every Sikh and not to create the categories in Sikhs and Sikh code of conduct and its discipline to live in Sikh way of life, in the truthful living while maintaining its distinct identity. Discipline and code of conduct is of great significance in every walk of life and is a must in a religion which cannot consist of free lancers and so every religion has its own.

Those who violate the prescribed Sikh initiation and Sikh code of conduct are called- patits-and they can come in the mainstream of Sikh panth by re- initiation and observance of Sikh code of conduct. The so-called Sehajdhari Sikhs do not take Sikh initiation and observe Sikh code of conduct, which are part of Sikh religion and they rather cut their hairs. They thus obviously do not fulfill the prerequisite conditions to be Sikhs. If any person believes in Sikh religion then there should be no hesitation to keep the hairs intact and wear turban on the head to appear to be Sikh, to get Sikh initiation and remain in Sikh code of conduct, to become and act as Sikh.

Confusion was created by making Sehajdhari Sikhs as voters in Sikh Gurdawaras act by an amendment in 1959. They had not been given any recognition or made voters for SGPC elections in Punjab Sikh Gurdawaras act 1925. In the provisions of this act, even Sikhs who did not keep their hairs intact were declared patits and debarred to become voters. In 1959 the amendment was made in the act to make non-Sikhs in the concocted name of Sehajdhari Sikhs as voters to oust Akali Dal from Sgpc, who had the full support of Sikhs and was in confrontation with the Govt.on the reorganization of Punjab on linguistic basis. The president of SGPC, who was nominee of Master Tara Singh, Akali leader, was actually removed under no confidence motion with the support of congress Govt. in 1959. The Master threatened to fast un to death, that the Govt. was interfering in Sikh Religious affairs.

Jawaharlal Nehru, prime minister of India invited the Akali leader, Master Tara Singh, for talks that Govt. had no

Intention to interfere in the religious affairs of Sikhs. A compromise emerged out in their meeting, named, "Nehru-Tara Singh pact", vide which Govt. was to never interfere in Sikh religious affairs and no amendment of Sikh Gurdawaras act, to be made without the concurrence of SGPC.

In the general elections of SGPC held in the next year, in 1960, Akali Dal won 136 seats out of 140, while congress sponsored board could get only 4 seats. Thereafter Akali Dal won SGPC elections upto now and retained its control over it. The amended provision was not exploited and neither it could be so done. SGPC passed resolutions several times to repeal the 1959 amendment but it was not so done. It even passed the resolution that there are no sehajdhari Sikhs now.

In 2003, just before the 2004-SGPC elections, this amendment was undone by govt. of India and Sehajdhari Sikhs were deprived of the right to be the voters for SGPC elections.

In Delhi Sikh Gurdawaras act, no sehaj dhari Sikh has been recognized to become the voter for the election of the management committee of the Gurdawaras and neither any patit Sikh who has cut his hairs. Thus the so called sehaj dhari sikhs and the patit Sikhs are nowhere recognized as Sikhs.

Now no Sehajdhari Sikh can become voter for any statutory Gurdawara management elections. There is no recognition of Sehajdhari Sikhs in Sikh religion. Either one is a Sikh or not. If someone aspires to become a Sikh then he has to become a Sikh by coming under the Sikh code of conduct. There is a lot of difference to aspire and to become a Sikh. In every religion those persons who follow the code of conduct of that religion are termed to be the followers of that religion. There are no Sehajdhari Christians, Muslims or Hindus. Why an exception to Sikh religion, which is even more strict to its discipline and code of conduct.

As to the definition and status of a patit Sikh, it needs to be understood, first of all the basic qualifications, that who is a Sikh. In addition to understand and act upon the Divine dictums of Guru Granth Sahib, Tenth Sikh Guru provided the Sikh Initiation, Sikh emblems and Sikh code of conduct to be obligatory for Sikhs. A Sikh, who defies or violates it, is a patit Sikh. Keeping the unshorn hairs has been given so much importance in Sikh religion that it is in the list of both of the five emblems and the four violations as prescribed by Tenth Guru.

In fact it was mandatory from the very beginning under the dictums of the founder of Sikh religion itself. It was recognized in law, in Punjab Sikh Gurdawaras act 1925, that a Sikh who shorns his hair is, patit, and cannot be the voter for SGPC elections. The separate Sikh identity is mainly recognized from the unshorn hairs, beard and turban on the head of a Sikh even to a blurred eye. If a Sikh is not in the form, no one not known to him, will take him as a Sikh. It is not understandable that, why the Sikhs who believe in Sikh religion and its dictums hesitate to keep them in this form and rather put forth untenable arguments that such a form is not needed?