
HUMAN SMUGGLING BY THE SIKH CLERGY THE PIGEONS' STORY

We have got a new agenda on our hands for discussion now. As I am the Recording Secretary for Khalsa Diwan Society, Vancouver, I didn't want to start up a new issue. But now it has become an International news item. Therefore, I must say a few words on this topic to explain the situation. We hold a Nagar Kirtan (religious procession) on Baisakhi Day, every year since 1979, here in Vancouver. This year was no exception. Some of our committee members belong to Akali Dal (Badal). They asked the SGPC officials for Guru Ji's hand written Aad Guru Granth Sahib and Shashtars for display at the Gurudwara during the Celebrations. These members personally went to Punjab to make arrangements for acquiring Shashtars (weapons) etc. Their friend Balbir Singh Changiara (not a member of our committee) made all the arrangements for bringing the Aad Guru Granth Sahib and Shashtars to Canada. As many Sikhs believe that anything belonging to the Sikh Gurus has to be accompanied by Five Amritdhari Sikhs, he also made arrangements for five Sikhs, and two Akali Government Ministers and a personal assistant to a minister to accompany the religious relics.

Their special entry visas for 30 days stay in Canada were secured through the office of the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, Mr Harbans Singh Dhaliwal. As to confirm our suspicions, on the day of departure some of our committee members went to the airport to check out if everyone has left for India, as per their departure schedule. When some of these Amritdhari Sikhs did not show up, things apparently became more

suspicious. There are three members from *Panj Pyaras* and a PA of one of the ministers missing. But there are rumours that this figure of four persons may increase as the story is becoming more clearer on daily basis. There is a war of words going on between the people involved. Each one is blaming the other and trying to generate new stories.

Dr Gurbachan Singh Bachan is denying his hand in this affair as Mr Changiara is telling that all the arrangements were made with the blessings of Dr Bachan. Also Mr Harbans Singh Dhaliwal phoned our executive to inform that one of those runaways has applied for the refugee status. Anyhow, we held an emergency meeting and did what was possible at the time. We will have five persons for the signing authority instead of two, for the future due to these irregularities in making this type of arrangements. We have expelled Mr Balbir Singh Changiara from the Gurudwara's membership and he will not be allowed to use the stage.

We have offered \$1000.00 reward on each individual for informing the immigration department of the whereabouts of these people. Then there are rumours that these pigeons have paid between Rs500,000 and 900,000 (Canadian equivalent between \$17,000 and \$30,000) to secure their entry into Canada. But I cannot say who has paid the money, to whom and how much. This kind of situations did occur before for more than one Gurudwara Sahibs, but it has always been hushed up. We did not want to hide it from the

people to whom we are accountable, who have elected us. We have brought it into the open, so people can decide for themselves, if we are working honestly. We always stress on the need for 5K's, 5 Beloved ones etc. But we hardly ever try to explain the reasoning behind these rituals. Inner change is and should be more (the most) important than outer appearance for anyone. We try to force lots of people to take *Amrit* without telling its true virtues. We simply like to see the numbers grow for thumping our chests in false ego. We prefer to see the quantity than quality. But our Indo-Canadian minister Mr Dhaliwal has been punished severely for his act of kindness to the Sikh community. He will not be allowed to issue any more visas to anyone for one year. He is also a suspect in some peoples' minds and has become a laughing stock for the other communities. But we believe that he is innocent in this whole affair and is not involved in taking any kind of money. It is a great shame for the whole Sikh community. I want to say it openly, that we should try to put more emphasis on the teachings of our great Gurus enshrined in the

Aad Guru Granth Sahib, not only on wearing the 5 K's. I think most readers will agree with me that you cannot judge a person by his external appearance - meaning, ***"All that glitters is not gold."***

As Mr. Chagiara travels to India very frequently, and is accompanied by Akali Government ministers, he has to answer all the suspicious happenings and his minister friends, who also have made several visits to Vancouver, Toronto and California accompanied by their PA's, will also have to do some explaining to make their records clearer. The presence of Akali ministers is not doing anybody any good except to create more divisions in our community by issuing controversial statements. There will be new surprises in the coming weeks on the Pigeons' Issue (*Kabootars' Issue*).

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