



ੴ ਵਾਹਿਗੁਰੂ ਜੀ ਕੀ ਫਤਹ ॥

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## ਅਵਤਾਰ ਸਿੰਘ

ਪ੍ਰਧਾਨ,  
ਸ਼੍ਰੋਮਣੀ ਗੁਰਦੁਆਰਾ ਪ੍ਰਬੰਧਕ ਕਮੇਟੀ,  
ਸ੍ਰੀ ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤਸਰ- 143 006

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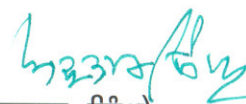
ਗੁਰੂ ਸਵਾਰੇ ਸਰਦਾਰ ਜੀਓ,

ਵਾਹਿਗੁਰੂ ਜੀ ਕਾ ਖਾਲਸਾ।  
ਵਾਹਿਗੁਰੂ ਜੀ ਕੀ ਫਤਹਿ॥

ਆਪ ਜੀ ਵੱਲੋਂ ਫਰਾਂਸ ਸਰਕਾਰ ਵੱਲੋਂ ਸਿੱਖ ਦਸਤਾਰ ਸਬੰਧੀ ਪੁੱਜਾ ਉੱਤਰ  
ਇਸ ਦਫਤਰ ਨੂੰ ਭੇਜਣ ਲਈ ਹਾਰਦਿਕ ਧੰਨਵਾਦੀ ਹਾਂ। ਫਰਾਂਸ ਸਰਕਾਰ ਦੇ  
ਇਸ ਜਵਾਬ ਦੀ ਰੋਸ਼ਨੀ ਵਿੱਚ ਆਪ ਜੀ ਨੇ ਆਪਣੀ ਰਾਏ ਭੇਜਣ ਦੀ  
ਕਿਰਪਾਲਤਾ ਕਰਨੀ। ਧੰਨਵਾਦੀ ਹੋਵਾਂਗਾ।

ਸਤਿਕਾਰ ਸਹਿਤ,

ਸੁਭਚਿੰਤਕ,

  
(ਅਵਤਾਰ ਸਿੰਘ),

ਸਰਦਾਰ ਤਰਲੋਚਨ ਸਿੰਘ ਜੀ,  
ਮੈਂਬਰ ਪਾਰਲੀਮੈਂਟ,  
ਬੀ-5, ਡਾਕਟਰ ਜ਼ਾਕਰ ਹੁਸੈਨ ਮਾਰਗ,  
ਨਵੀਂ ਦਿੱਲੀ।

ਉਤਾਰਾ :- ਇੰਚਾਰਜ (ਟਰੱਸਟ) ਪਾਸ ਸਬੰਧਤ ਫਾਈਲ ਵਿੱਚ ਸ਼ਾਮਲ ਕਰਨ  
ਹਿਤ।

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# Shiromany Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee

Teja Singh Samundri Hall  
Sri Amritsar



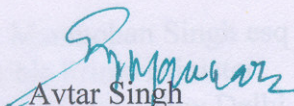
Jathedar Avtar Singh  
President

during his visit to India so that he should be informed about the serious inconsistencies in the French Law which requires an amendment as they are encroaching upon the personal liberties of the Sikhs, which the Constitution of France based on the grand principles of liberty, equality and fraternity cannot permit in any way.

Secondly, it is desired that the Government of India should put not only diplomatic pressure but also moral and economic pressure on the President of France during his proposed visit to India through public debates on T.V. Channels with the intensity which is required to solve this problem peacefully. If the response is positive from the side of the French President, then we as representative body of the Sikhs, will provide all assistance to the French Government on the basis provided to the British Government to amend the Law. But if the response is evasive and not satisfactory or negative then Government of India should put economic pressure to protect the interest of the NRI Sikhs who have been provided with dual citizenship status in 2003. I hope, respecting the sentiments of the NRI Sikhs you shall be taking up this issue with the visiting President of France with the aim of achieving positive results and not mere assurances.

With regards,

Yours Sincerely

  
Avtar Singh  
(President S.G.P.C)

# Shiromany Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee

Teja Singh Samundri Hall  
Sri Amritsar



**Jathedar Avtar Singh**  
President

of the Sikhs and Jews "is not to be considered to constitute head-dress in the traditional sense ". Mr Frank Underwood tendered an apology BCTV.

In 1991 four Albertan ,including three former RCMP Officers and a former Mountie's wife, filed a suit claiming that the decision of the former Royal Canadian Mounted Police Commissioner, Norman Inkster to allow the Sikhs to wear the turban in uniform offended the force's non religious nature and was discriminatory . This group collected 210000/- signatures on a petition for the parliament to stop turbans among the Mounties. When they failed, these people challenged the decision in the court contending that RCMP should be neutral and not show their religion in any form. Rendering her arguments against the petition , Justice Barbara agreed that the police must be neutral from political and religious bias, but pronounced that any evidence that turban wearing Officers might be biased is "speculative and vague ,and you don,t become less of a Canadian merely because your religion require you to wear a turban or a yarmulke". The Ex- Mounties filed an appeal against this decision in the Federal Court of Appeal in Calgary , which was rejected by three judges panel

and pronounced that the decision of the RCMP to allow Sikh Mounties was "an Article of Faith". The Supreme Court of Canada also rejected the appeal and upheld the decision of the lower court . These three major decisions of the courts and Govts. of UK , Saskatchewan and Canada may serve as an eye opener to the law makers of France, particularly the decisions of the Canadian Govt. and courts, as the issues involved are identical with French Law.

- 4) The French Law Makers` have ignored the facts that the turban is not a symbol but an Article of Faith, and by discarding this Article of Faith a Sikh becomes an apostate. Further even after removing his turban a Sikh retains his identity with his tress-knot(long hair tied above the head) and beards. That is why Sheikh Ahmed Deedat, a South African teacher , rightly opined : "the turbaned Sikhs look like a lion; the rest of us look like sheep, afraid to be identified ". You cannot provide human justice by over-riding Divine Laws as has been done by the French Government . The Creation of the Creator is in splendid colours ; a painting of the Devine Painter with one brush but in different colours. The Law of the French Government is an attempt to become a bigger architect and distort the painting of the Divine Painter with one colour.

There is no room left for doubt that the French Government was not aware of the above points , and it is desired that we may be allowed to meet the French President

# Shiromany Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee

Teja Singh Samundri Hall  
Sri Amritsar



**Jathedar Avtar Singh**  
President

of the Sikhs and Jews "is not to be considered to constitute head-dress in the traditional sense". Mr Frank Underwood tendered an apology BCTV.

" On a higher plane our God never told us to wear crash helmets. Their Guru told them to wear turban . In this argument they ( Sikhs ) have the edge ".

Fred Balcombe, Lord Mayor Manchester

Before the British Parliament amended Motor Cycle Crash Helmets ( Religious Exemption) Act.1976 Lawrence Hennerly , Hon'ble Judge of Aylesbury Crown Court pronounced the Judgement on February 18, 1976, on the basis of two expert witnesses of noted scholar, late Dr Trilochan Singh and Lt.General Sir Reginald Arthur Savory, who commanded the Sikh Regiment in the first World War, and brought two important point in his Judgment that i) the Sikhs were not consulted before the bill was passed and ii) he is convinced that the Sikhs would not wear helmets under any circumstances.

Above law points were enough to amend the law and giving exemption to the Sikhs from wearing crash helmets, and protected their right to wear the turban.

- 2) Similarly in Saskatchewan, the requirement that Sikh should wear a crash helmet was declared unconstitutional in the Supreme Court on the grounds that it would interfere with practice of religion.
- 3) In Canada, Mr Pritam Singh Johal , an old war veteran 's fight for his turban would put many lazybones to shame. Lt. Col. Pritam Singh visited the Newton Legion Branch on November 8 ,1993 three days before the remembrance day parade to seek details of dress. Despite clearance of a formal jacket and turban , he alongwith his four Sikh colleagues was stopped at the gate. Mr Johal pleaded his case with Mr Frank Underwood, President of Newton Legion Branch, but it proved futile. Ms Penny Priddy walked out of the lounge in protest against the humiliating treatment meted out to the Sikhs. This was sufficient to shift the issue on National media and put pressure on the Canadian authorities. Consequently Executive Council of Royal Canadian Legion called an emergency meeting and unanimously approved a national policy that the wearing of religious head-dress

above points , and it is desired that we may be allowed to meet the French President

# Shiromany Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee

Teja Singh Samundri Hall  
Sri Amritsar



**Jathedar Avtar Singh**

President

- 1) Turban is not a symbol of Sikhs, but an Article of Faith. It is inseparable part of Sikh baptism. Here, I would like to quote the speech of Lord Avebury in the House of Lords on October 5, 1976 to amend the Motor-Cycle Crash helmets

(Religious Exemption) Act 1976. "My Lords, I have also consulted the authorities in the Sikh Gurdwaras in Bradford and Southall and I have the benefit of advice from one of the foremost and distinguished Sikh Scholars in the world, Dr Trilochan Singh. To quote from the book of Dr Singh: "The turban of the Sikhs is not merely a head-dress. It is inseparably connected with Sikh baptism and the Sikh code of the conduct. That is an authoritative statement and interpretation of the scriptures as you will get, because in the Sikh religion there is no hierarchy of clerics who can add to or embellish the doctrine as time goes by," Lord Avebury was supported overwhelmingly, and some of the speeches of Hon'ble Lords are reproduced for the benefit of the French Authorities.

- a) "The study of other religious system is not one that can be mastered in a short time. However, as in all cases, involving religious convictions of others, we must respect even when we do not necessarily understand. We should be guided in matters concerning other faiths by the members of those faiths themselves. We should not forget that during two World Wars Sikhs troops in the forces of British Empire were not forced to wear steel helmets. They fought and died for us. As long as Britain is a nation, we will commemorate the heroism of our dead."

Lord Mowbray and Stourton.

If people wish to follow their own religious convictions, why can we not allow them to do so?

Lord Kinnaird.

"It is universally accepted in the House of Commons that the immigrant communities must be treated equally and without discrimination ....it is important that we in Parliament should uphold their religious rights and beliefs.....the message will go to the world that Britain remains great, sane, sensible and tolerant."

Mr. Winston S. Churchill.

# Shiromany Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee

Teja Singh Samundri Hall  
Sri Amritsar



**Jathedar Avtar Singh**

President

Date: January 23, 2008

Dr. Manmohan Singh esq

Hon'ble Prime Minister

Union of India

New Delhi

Respected Sardar Manmohan Singh Ji,

In continuation of earlier my letter dated January 8, 16 and 17, 2008 on the issue of ban, imposed by the French Government on wearing of turbans by the Sikh students, I am again taking up the issue with the Government of India, to which you represent as Prime Minister and as a member of the Sikh Commonwealth. I have been directed by the Ecclesiastical Court of the Sri Akal Takhat Sahib to take up the issue with seriousness which it deserves with President Nicolas Sarkozy of France during his visit to India through you, and it is my earnest desire that you should help the Sikhs, which are in minority. Efforts of Govt. of India through diplomatic channels have been futile which has created restlessness among the Sikhs throughout the world. S.G.P.C., the representative body of the Sikhs has consulted eminent scholars and lawyers, and they have advised us to bring to the notice of the French President the serious lapses in the French Law, decided by various court dictas of international Courts as follows:

The French Law No 2004-228 (March 15, 2004) is based on the recommendation of the Bernard Stasi Commission, which says that ostentatious display of religious symbols violated the secular principals of French School System, and recommended a law against wearing of conspicuous religious symbols, such as head covers for Muslim girls, caps for Jewish boys, turbans for Sikh boys and large Christian Crosses in school, funded by the French Government. The commission was of the view that such a law would promote French Republican values and better social integration of all communities in France. The ban came into effect in September 2004. It is a constitutional crisis which cannot be resolved by the court of France, but by the parliament of France on the following Counts:

Mr. Winston A. Chahal



ੴ ਸਾਹਿਬੁ ਜੀ ਕੀ ਫਤਹ ॥

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**Avtar Singh**

**President,**  
Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee  
Sri Amritsar.


27394  
14-2-08

Respected Sardar Manmohan Singh Ji

I may draw your attention towards my letter dated January 23, 2008, delivered to Sh. Shiv Shankar Menon, Secretary Foreign Ministry, during meeting with S.G.P.C. delegation, copy enclosed. I am also enclosing letter dated 14.02.2007 from the Office of Prime Minister of France, informing me that Foreign Affairs Minister Mr. Blay is entrusted with the task of examining the issue. Our delegation was assured that the issue of turban ban shall be taken up with the French President Nicolas Sarkozy. Till date I have not been informed about the outcome of your talks with the French President. In the light of assurances of offices of the Prime Minister of France and India, I hope you shall be kind enough to inform the outcome of your talks and what is required from our side to achieve the desired results without further loss of time to pacify the Sikhs all over the world on this sensitive issue and ease out the pressure of various Sikh Organisations, being put on the Ecclesiastical Court of Sri Akal Takhat Sahib and S.G.P.C.

With regards,

Sincerely Yours

  
Avtar Singh  
(President S.G.P.C)

DR. Manmohan Singh esq  
Hon'ble Prime Minister,  
Union of India, New Delhi.

9/

R. H. Ji 2008  
31/01/08  
29-2-08  
14-2-08



ੴ ਵਾਹਿਗੁਰੂ ਜੀ ਕੀ ਫਤਹਿ॥



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## ਸ਼੍ਰੋਮਣੀ ਗੁਰਦੁਆਰਾ ਪ੍ਰਬੰਧਕ ਕਮੇਟੀ, ਸ੍ਰੀ ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤਸਰ

ਦਫਤਰ ਦੇ ਆਰਡਰ ਨੰਬਰ 4090 ਮਿਤੀ 28-2-2008 ਦੀ ਨਕਲ:-

ਯੂ. ਐਨ. ਓ. ਤੋਂ ਆ ਰਹੇ ਪ੍ਰਤੀਨਿਧ ਨਾਲ ਦਸਤਾਰ ਦੇ ਮਸਲੇ ਸਬੰਧੀ ਗੱਲਬਾਤ ਕਰਨ ਲਈ ਦਸਤਾਰ ਸਬੰਧੀ ਚਲਦੀ ਲਿਖਾਪੜੀ ਵਾਲੀ ਫਾਈਲ ਸ੍ਰ: ਸੁਖਦੇਵ ਸਿੰਘ ਜੀ ਭੋਰ ਜਨਰਲ ਸਕੱਤਰ ਸ਼੍ਰੋਮਣੀ ਗੁ: ਪ੍ਰ: ਕਮੇਟੀ ਪਾਸ ਦਸਤੀ ਪਹੁੰਚਾਉਣ ਅਤੇ ਜਰੂਰੀ ਕਾਗਜ਼ਾਤ ਦਫਤਰ ਸਬ-ਆਫਿਸ ਸ਼੍ਰੋਮਣੀ ਕਮੇਟੀ ਚੰਡੀਗੜ੍ਹ ਵਿਖੇ ਪਹੁੰਚਾਉਣ ਹਿੱਤ ਸ੍ਰ: ਬੇਅੰਤ ਸਿੰਘ ਸੁਪਰਵਾਈਜਰ ਟਰੱਸਟ ਦੀ ਡਿਊਟੀ ਲਗਾਈ ਜਾਂਦੀ ਹੈ।

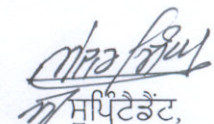
ਸਹੀ:- ਸਕੱਤਰ,  
ਸ਼੍ਰੋਮਣੀ ਗੁਰਦੁਆਰਾ ਪ੍ਰਬੰਧਕ ਕਮੇਟੀ।

ਨੰਬਰ:- 27845

ਮਿਤੀ:- 29-2-08

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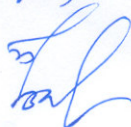
- 1- ਸੁਪ੍ਰਿੰਟੈਂਡੈਂਟ ਜੀ, ਸ਼੍ਰੋਮਣੀ ਗੁ: ਪ੍ਰ: ਕਮੇਟੀ।
- 2- ਸ੍ਰ: ਬੇਅੰਤ ਸਿੰਘ ਸੁਪਰਵਾਈਜਰ ਟਰੱਸਟ ਸ਼੍ਰੋਮਣੀ ਗੁ: ਪ੍ਰ: ਕਮੇਟੀ।  
ਪਾਸ ਗਿਆਤ ਅਤੇ ਲੋੜੀਂਦੀ ਕਾਰਵਾਈ ਕਰਨ/ਕਰਵਾਉਣ ਹਿੱਤ।

  
ਸੁਪ੍ਰਿੰਟੈਂਡੈਂਟ,  
ਸ਼੍ਰੋਮਣੀ ਗੁਰਦੁਆਰਾ ਪ੍ਰਬੰਧਕ ਕਮੇਟੀ।

o/k

R.K.O. 28/2/08

ਕੰਮ ਨਾਮ ਨਾਮ ਨਾਮ ਨਾਮ



1-3-08

# Sarkozy visit: Protest over turban ban likely

TNN  
TIMES NEWS NETWORK

**Jalandhar:** With French President Nicholas Sarkozy coming as chief guest for Republic Day celebrations, the issue of French ban on turban has started coming to fore. Shiromani Sikh Council (International) has announced it will hold a demonstration at Delhi against the visit of French president if the Indian government fail to raise the issue and get it resolved.

Addressing a press conference here Pal Singh France, who was the first one from France to raise the issue of ban a few years back, said the Indian government had failed to effectively raise the issue. "We are trying to get an appointment with Prime Minis-

ter Manmohan Singh to take up the issue with him. PM can raise the issue or arrange a meeting with Sarkozy. If he does not act proactively, we shall hold a massive protest in Delhi, he said.

He said that PM should impress upon the French President to issue a letter for the Sikh community on the pattern of earlier two letters issued in 1989 and 1991, allowing Sikhs to wear turban. No amendment was required in the constitution of France for that purpose, he said.

Meanwhile he told that though the Sikhs had lost their case in the French Supreme Court now they were preparing to move to the European Union Parliament and EU court against the ban.

ਤਰ੍ਹਾਂ ਮਤੇ ਰਿਸ਼ਮ

# Getting it wrong on the 'French turban'

## Defend it as the right of an ethnic community, not as a religious right

by Jaidev Singh Rai

**T**HE French law that affected the Sikh turban bans ostentatious signs of religion. Three questions arise: Is the turban essential to Sikhs? Yes. Can one community be exempted as 'special' from a common law, by any government? Almost never. That leaves only one option. Does the law really apply?

The law banning religious items in French State institutions was first established in 1905, separating the secular State from any association with religion. All visible signs of religion were stripped from the walls of State institutions including State schools. The clergy, including nuns in State Schools, were required to wear non-clerical clothes.

This law was a development of the legendary French Revolution and its subsequent preference for secularism and human rights. Rigid secularism mostly evolved as a reaction against the bloody and protracted conflicts between Catholic and Protestant in which millions died. Moreover, the Church often collaborated with monarchies. Robespierre's infamous reign of terror did not spare the Church, stripping it of power.

Even out of power, the Catholic and Protestant institutions continued to compete insidiously in State institutions, often accusing the government of being partial to the other. A weary State disassociated itself completely from any religion. Hence the 1905 law. A deep suspicion of institutional religion as a predatory, oppressive and reactionary force is embedded in the French psyche.

Muslim migrations in the twentieth century brought new challenges, as some Muslim girls wore Hijab as a religious requirement. The French State system allows Schools some local decisions. However the number

of Hijab wearing girls increased exponentially, with increasingly politicised Islamic movements, after 2001, and were down French tolerance. Sarkozy, who is President now, was the Interior Minister who precipitated reaction. Citing 1905 Laicité he stressed that standards had fallen. New provisions were proposed.

Not to be accused of targeting Muslims, the proposed law mentioned the Hijab, the Jewish Yarmulka and the large Christian Cross as ostentatious signs. Neither the Jews nor the Christians were practically affected as both had long established private institutions.

For some reason the turban was not mentioned. Nevertheless, some Sikh groups raised a public alarm despite being advised to hold discreet talks first with the French government. By going public they exposed the issue to media hacks who challenged the French Government. The government responded that it was an oversight and the law would affect turbans! The first damage was done. I was contacted by concerned Sikhs in France.

Through my contact with the French Human Rights Ambassador to the UN, I was able to organise a number of meetings with high profile officials in the French Prime Minister's office, the Ministry of Interior, the External Affairs Ministry and the Education Ministry. Finally there was a meeting with the French Education Minister. The dialogues opened up possibilities of resolving the issue.

With a crash course on the French constitution, its political history and philosophy, I felt the best line was to suggest that the law does not apply to the Sikhs. My argument was that working definition of the words 'ostentatious' and 'religion' as implied in the law are inconsistent with the Sikh practice of wearing turbans. The French concept of religion was rooted in European Christian doctrinal history, as a proscriptive and

exclusionist institution interfering with human freedoms, intolerant of non-believers and other beliefs and is forever seeking to 'save souls' through conversion.

The French position was that an ostentatious sign of religion is a form of propaganda to encourage others to engage in a dialogue and subtly convert! The French State saw it as its human rights obligation to protect the rights of its atheist pupils not be exposed to religious propaganda of any form.

Clearly this was diametrically opposite to Sikh beliefs and history as well as the significance of the turban. It does not make legal or administrative sense to argue that the world religion be understood differentially for different

not venture. But you can see non-baptised turban-wearing Sikhs in all venues of social life, including pubs, dance halls etc.

Furthermore these, there are famous people like the agnostic Kushiwan Singh and the atheist Harkishan Singh Surjit who are Sikhs. If the French working definition of turban as an ostentatious religious sign was used we would have to ask these people to remove their turbans or change habits, in other words the large majority of Sikhs. The inconsistency between the French understanding of a religious item and the Sikh practice of wearing turban was evident.

The law also sought people to 'conceal' their signs of religion. If there is a religious requirement among the five

**The words 'ostentatious' and 'religion' as understood in the French law are inconsistent with the Sikh practice of wearing turbans. You can see turban-wearing Sikhs in all venues of social life, including pubs and dance halls**

ent religions. The best line was that the turban was incommensurate with the words 'ostentatious' and 'religion' as comprehended by the French State.

I strengthened the argument with facts. Over 90 per cent of Sikhs who wear turbans are not 'baptised' in the formal sense. If they are not even totally committed to their 'religion' would they start converting others? On the other hand, a lady with a Hijab, a Jew with a Yarmulka or a Christian with large cross is consciously stating that he or she is fully committed to their religion.

Secondly, one never sees any of these people voluntarily present in places where the deeply religious do

identity and religion and an 'exception' had to be made. While details were being sorted with officials, the letters and phone calls increased.

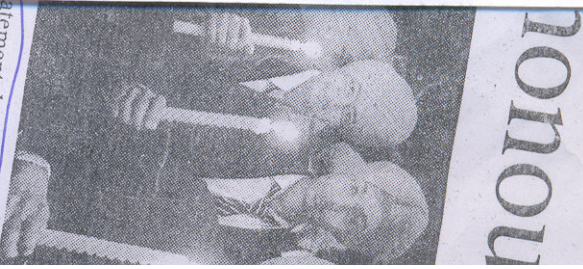
French Government officials were in a quandary and started to backtrack. They said to me that clearly there are two interpretations of the turban and it is not the responsibility of the French Government to either arbitrate or choose one. There is no provision for a separate cultural or ethnic identity enshrined in France. The formal circular as an official position was dropped but they agreed to verbally explain to concerned schools. A battle won was slipping.

More was to come. At the height of France-US tension over Iraq, many Sikhs lobbied United States senators and Congressmen for support. The Congressmen wrote glowing letters reminding the French of their obligation to freedom of religion and human rights! Matters went downhill fast and French officials lost the will to help the Sikh community.

It is testament of the first generation of Sikh migrants from villages to the west that they protected the turban through pragmatic solutions. The right to wear the turban in UK was won as a religious right, but as the right of an ethnic community, in the famous House of Lords Maudslayi decision in 1984.

It is a sad indictment of the current young leaders among Sikhs that not only have they failed to improve on the diplomatic and political skills of their parent, but they have in fact become more fundamentalist and unrealistic. The issue can still be resolved if mature and diplomatic minds took charge of the issue. Whatever one may say about the French, they are a reasonable people who will concede when an argument is rational.

Unfortunately, many Sikhs groups and individuals started their own campaigns, sending letters stating that the turban was an essential item of Sikh



statement by the French Interior Minister Sarkozy speaking at the Assembly in New Orleans on 25, 2007, which related on the Internet, 'attachment to one's faith, language and culture, and to one's thought and belief - all legitimate and profound elements of human identity. To deny that is to sow the seeds of humiliation. A 'clash of cultures' will not be averted by force, but by dialogue and belief alike; and religious diversity must be protected everywhere and by all.' So, Mr President.

The writer is Director, Sikh Human Rights Group, Southall Middlesex, United Kingdom

# Turban, a matter of pride and honour

by Roopinder Singh

**P**RIDE and honour make a potent position and the turban evokes these feelings in those Sikhs who wear a turban. People have been wearing turbans since time immemorial and you find individuals wearing turbans in many nations in Asia and Africa. While for some turbans might be an optional, formal, attire, for the Sikhs wearing a turban is a religious imperative.

Turban-wearing Sikhs stand out in a crowd, for good or bad, and there are many documented cases, spread over centuries and spanning the globe, when the Sikhs have faced discrimination and worse because of their turbans.

Often prominent people would stand up for their rights. When the question of Sikhs wearing turbans and refusing to wear steel helmets came in front of the British parliament, Sir Winston Churchill said it was "a matter of deep regret that consequent to contemporary cynicism, people had been toying with many precious social and religious values, but those who want to retain and maintain them with due respect should receive our appreciation as well as help. The Sikhs need our help for such a cause. We should help them willingly.

He who is familiar with Sikh history knows the Sikhs' relationship with England, the high degree of their achievements, and must help them with full strength. The Sikhs should be exempted from wearing steel helmets because it hurts their religious feelings".

Especially in the final decades of the last century, the Sikhs would take recourse to the legal systems of the nations that they faced discrimination in, and more in time would be granted relief since courts worldwide recognised the fundamental right of the Sikhs to wear an item of their religious attire. This was so in Britain, Canada and the US, to name just three major nations.

In France, however, it was the state that discriminated against Sikh school students and banned them from wearing turbans to school, because turbans were seen as "conspicuous religious symbols". It enacted an all-embracing law against "conspicuous religious symbols" in 2004 and enforced it vigorously. Others affected by the law include Muslim girls wearing headscarves, Jewish boys wearing skull caps and Christians wearing large crosses.

The logic behind this decision is to take secularism not as equal respect for all religions, as it is seen in India; or a separation of the church and the state

as is practised in most of Europe and the US, but a particularly narrow and strident interpretation that seeks to stamp out religion and religious symbols to preserve secularism.

French courts have supported the government in this and now the principle is being extended-the Sikhs are being asked to uncover their heads while being photographed for driving licences. Recently, United Sikhs, an international charitable organisation that has also been fighting for the cause of the turban, reported that its appeal regarding Shingara Mann Singh, 52, a French national who was refused a replacement driver's licence because he did not take off his turban, was turned down by a top French court. Similarly, appeals by eight French students, who have sought to be allowed to attend school, have met with a similar fate.

The forthcoming visit of French President Nicolas Sarkozy has drawn attention to this issue again. The issue of banning turbans in French schools has been raised, protest marches have taken place, and vigils are being planned.

It is a historical fact that 80,000 Sikh soldiers fought for France and many lost their lives during the two world wars, fighting major battles in Ypres, La Bassée, NeuveChapelle, Festubert,



Loos, Givenchy and Somme.

The late Hardit Singh Malik was granted the French Legion of Honour Award in 1952. He had served as a fighter pilot for the French Air Force, and won nine aerial battles in World War I. The turbaned Malik also served as Indian Ambassador to France soon after India became independent.

The issue is neither the contributions of the Sikhs to the freedom of France, nor the ties they have with France and the French people. What is at stake here is a fundamental matter of giving people the freedom to profess and practise their faith.

The following are excerpts from a

statement by the French President Nicolas Sarkozy speaking at the UN General Assembly in New York on September 25, 2007, which is being circulated on the Internet:

"Attachment to one's faith, to one's language and culture, and to one's way of life, thought and belief - all this is natural, legitimate and profoundly human... To deny that is to sow the seeds of humiliation. A 'clash of civilisations' will not be averted by forcing everyone to think and believe alike; cultural and religious diversity must be accepted everywhere and by all."

Quite so, Mr President.

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22/07/2012  
25/11/12  
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16.1.08

**Respected Sardar Manmohan Singh Ji,**

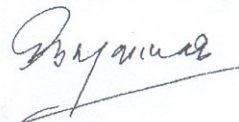
Waheguru Ji Ka Khalsa,  
Waheguru Ji Ki Fateh

Inviting your kind attention to my earlier letter No. 50508, dated 8.1.2008, I have the honour to state that a meeting between the S.G.P.C. delegation and visiting President of France may kindly be arranged so that the long pending issue of Sikh turban in France may be discussed into a satisfactory solution.

Kindly intimate time and date for this meeting.

With best regards,

Yours sincerely,



**(AVTAR SINGH)**

**Dr. Manmohan Singh Ji,**  
Hon'ble Prime Minister  
Govt. of India,  
New Delhi.





160  
**Avtar Singh**

ੴ ਵਿਗਿਗੁਰੂ ਜੀ ਕੀ ਫਤਹ ॥

**President,**  
Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee  
Sri Amritsar.

Turban, is not a symbol or an article of clothing, it is essential part of his / her being a Sikh.

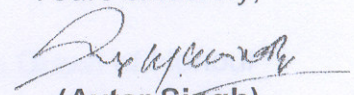
It may not be out of place to reiterate the historical facts regarding the Sikh association with France. It is estimated that during the World Wars 80,000 Turban wearing Sikhs fought for France's freedom on the frontline. Turban wearing Sikh soldiers served in France in 13 cavalry and 8 infantry regiments during World War 1. Their bravery and actions have been duly recognised.

Sikhs also fought for the Allied Forces in other European countries i.e. the United States, Asia and Africa. More than 83,000 Sikhs died and over 109,000 were injured to protect the honour and integrity of the people of all faiths. It is ironic twist of circumstances that the Sikhs have now to fight for the freedom to wear the Turban in France.

I am sure that you will take up the matter with the visiting French President with all the seriousness that it demands, and convey to him the concern of the Government of India, The Punjab Government, the Sikhs worldwide and the SGPC.

I am sure that your intervention will bear positive result.

Yours sincerely,

  
(Avtar Singh)

**Dr. Manmohan Singh,**  
Hon'ble Prime Minister of India,  
New Delhi.



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ੴ ਵਾਹਿਗੁਰੂ ਜੀ ਕੀ ਫਤਹ ॥

**Avtar Singh**

**President,**  
Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee  
Sri Amritsar.

No: 50556

De: 17-1-2008

**Repected Sardar Manmohan Singh Ji,**

Waheguru Ji Ka Khalsa  
Waheguru Ji Ki Fateh

You are well aware of the French Law passed in March 2004 banning what it terms as conspicuous religious symbols in Government run schools. Under the law, school children are banned from wearing the Christian cross, Jewish skull-cap, Islamic head scarf and the Sikh Turban. This law has anguished the Sikhs world wide.

Of all the countries worldwide, in which 25 million Sikhs live, France is the only country that has banned the Sikh Turban in schools. Thereby French-Sikh children are placed in a very difficult position as the turban is an integral part of the Sikh faith. Consequently, French-Sikh school children are being forced to choose between their education and their religion. Their freedom to practice and manifest their religion is, therefore, being denied. Contrary to its stated objective of helping integration into mainstream society, the law would result in their isolation.

The law is clearly in violation of international law, various international treaties and instruments.

The visit of the French President Mr. Nicolas Sarkozy as the Guest of Honour on the Republic day offers an ideal opportunity to take up the issue with him especially in view of his enlightened views regarding religious diversity and tolerance.

It needs to be impressed upon the French President that a Sikh is inseparable from his or her Turban. It is an inalienable right of the Sikhs established by religion, sanctified by tradition and history; a right which has withstood the trials and tribulations of modernity, a privilege, which has been upheld with sacrifice. To a Sikh his / her unshorn hair and turban are mandatory. Unshorn hair, and by extension the



ੴ ਵਾਹਿਗੁਰੂ ਜੀ ਕੀ ਫਤਹ ॥

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**Avtar Singh**

**President,**  
Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee  
Sri Amritsar.

No: 50508

dt: 8-1-2008

**Respected Sardar Manmohan Singh Ji,**

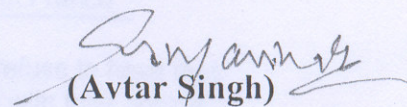
Waheguru Ji Ka Khalsa  
Waheguru Ji Ki Fateh

As Mr. Nicolas Sarzoky, hon'ble President of France is shortly visiting India, the issue of Sikh turban in France needs to be sorted out with him. Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, Sri Amritsar proposes to send a delegation to the hon'ble President to discuss this issue.

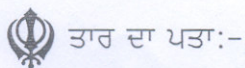
It would also be highly appreciated if you kindly arrange such a meeting and also steer the discussion to a successful end.

With best regards,

Yours sincerely,

  
(Avtar Singh)

✓  
**Dr. Manmohan Singh Ji,**  
Hon'ble Prime Minister of India,  
New Delhi.



ਤਾਰ ਦਾ ਪਤਾ:-

135

ੴ ਵਾਹਿਗੁਰੂ ਜੀ ਕੀ ਫਤਹਿ॥

ਟੈਲੀਫੋਨ

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ਸ਼੍ਰੋਮਣੀ ਗੁਰਦੁਆਰਾ ਪ੍ਰਬੰਧਕ ਕਮੇਟੀ ਦੀ ਜਨਰਲ ਕਮੇਟੀ ਦੀ ਇਕੱਤਰਤਾ ੧੭ ਚੇਤ, ਸੰਮਤ ਨਾਨਕਸ਼ਾਹੀ ੫੩੯ ਮੁਤਾਬਿਕ (੩੦-੦੩-੨੦੦੭) ਦੇ ਮਤਾ ਨੰਬਰ ੨੭੦ ਦੀ ਨਕਲ:-

"ਦਸਤਾਰ ਕੇਵਲ ਸਿੱਖਾਂ ਦਾ ਧਾਰਮਿਕ ਚਿੰਨ੍ਹ ਹੀ ਨਹੀਂ ਬਲਕਿ ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਦੀ ਨਿਆਰੀ ਅਤੇ ਵੱਖਰੀ ਪਹਿਚਾਣ ਦਾ ਚਿੰਨ੍ਹ ਵੀ ਹੈ ਵਿਸ਼ਵ ਪੱਧਰ 'ਤੇ ਸਿੱਖ ਦੀ ਪਹਿਚਾਣ ਦਸਤਾਰਧਾਰੀ ਮਨੁੱਖ ਦੇ ਰੂਪ ਵਿਚੋਂ ਸਥਾਪਤ ਹੋਈ ਹੈ, ਜਿਸ ਤੋਂ ਦੁਨੀਆਂ ਦਾ ਕੋਈ ਆਦਮੀ ਮੁਨਕਰ ਨਹੀਂ ਹੋ ਸਕਦਾ। ਕਈ ਬਾਹਰਲੇ ਮੁਲਕਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਕੇਵਲ ਦਸਤਾਰ ਕਰਕੇ ਹੀ ਸਿੱਖਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਡਰਾਈਵਿੰਗ ਅਤੇ ਫੈਕਟਰੀਆਂ ਵਿਚ ਸੁਰੱਖਿਆ ਟੋਪ ਪਾਉਣ ਤੋਂ ਛੋਟ ਮਿਲੀ ਹੋਈ ਹੈ ਕਿਉਂ ਕਿ ਸਿੱਖ ਧਰਮ ਸਾਬਤ ਸੂਰਤ ਦਸਤਾਰ ਸਿਰਾ ਦਾ ਧਾਰਨੀ ਹੈ। ਭਾਰਤ ਵਿਚ ਅੰਗਰੇਜ਼ਾਂ ਦੇ ਰਾਜ ਸਮੇਂ ਫੌਜਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਸਿੱਖ ਸਿਪਾਹੀ ਅਤੇ ਅਫਸਰ ਲਈ ਸਾਬਤ ਸੂਰਤ ਦਸਤਾਰਧਾਰੀ ਰਹਿਣਾ ਲਾਜ਼ਮੀ ਸੀ। ਸੰਸਾਰ ਯੁੱਧਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਵੀ ਫੌਜੀ ਸਿੱਖ ਦਸਤਾਰਧਾਰੀ ਮਨੁੱਖ ਦੇ ਰੂਪ ਵਿਚ ਹੀ ਲੜੇ ਅਤੇ ਹੋਰ ਤੇ ਹੋਰ ਫਰਾਂਸ ਲਈ ਵੀ ਜੂਝੇ ਪਰ ਅਫਸੋਸ ਦੀ ਗੱਲ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਫਰਾਂਸ ਵਿਚ ਹੀ ਸਕੂਲੀ ਬੱਚਿਆਂ ਨੂੰ ਦਸਤਾਰ ਸਜਾਉਣ ਦੇ ਬੁਨਿਆਦੀ ਅਤੇ ਧਾਰਮਿਕ ਹੱਕ ਤੋਂ ਮਹਿਰੂਮ ਕੀਤਾ ਗਿਆ ਹੈ। ਦੁਨੀਆਂ ਭਰ ਤੋਂ ਇਸ ਵਿਰੁੱਧ ਕੀਤੀਆਂ ਗਈਆਂ ਅਪੀਲਾਂ, ਦਲੀਲਾਂ ਦੀ ਪ੍ਰਵਾਹ ਨਾ ਕਰਦਿਆਂ ਸਿੱਖ ਬੱਚਿਆਂ ਦੇ ਦਸਤਾਰ ਸਜਾਉਣ 'ਤੇ ਪਾਬੰਦੀ ਲਾ ਦਿੱਤੀ ਗਈ ਹੈ। ਸੰਸਾਰ ਦੇ ਕੁਝ ਹੋਰ ਮੁਲਕਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਬੱਚਿਆਂ ਦੇ ਕ੍ਰਿਪਾਨ ਪਹਿਨਣ 'ਤੇ ਇਤਰਾਜ਼ ਕੀਤਾ ਜਾ ਰਿਹਾ ਹੈ ਅਤੇ ਕਿਧਰੇ ਉਹਨਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਮੁਸਲਮਾਨਾਂ ਨਾਲ ਰੱਲਗਡ ਕਰਕੇ ਨਫਰਤ ਦੀ ਬਲੀ ਚੜਾਇਆ ਜਾਂਦਾ ਹੈ। ਇਥੇ ਹੀ ਬੱਸ ਨਹੀਂ ਡੈਨਮਾਰਕ 'ਚ ਇਕ ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤਧਾਰੀ ਨੌਜਵਾਨ ਸਿੱਖ ਨੂੰ ਕ੍ਰਿਪਾਨ ਧਾਰਨ ਕਰਨ 'ਤੇ ਉਥੋਂ ਦੇ ਪ੍ਰਸ਼ਾਸਨ ਨੇ ਕੇਸ ਦਰਜ ਕਰਕੇ ਸਿੱਖਾਂ ਦੀ ਧਾਰਮਿਕ ਭਾਵਨਾਵਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਭਾਰੀ ਠੇਸ ਪਹੁੰਚਾਈ ਹੈ। ਇਸ ਕਾਰਵਾਈ ਉਪਰੰਤ ਉਥੋਂ ਦੀ ਅਦਾਲਤ ਨੇ ਸਿੱਖਾਂ ਦੇ ਧਾਰਮਿਕ ਚਿੰਨ੍ਹ ਨੂੰ ਗੈਰ-ਕਾਨੂੰਨੀ ਹਥਿਆਰ ਕਹਿ ਕੇ ਸਿੱਖਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਕਿਰਪਾਨ ਧਾਰਨ ਕਰਨ 'ਤੇ ਪਾਬੰਦੀ ਲਗਾ ਦਿੱਤੀ ਹੈ।

ਸ਼੍ਰੋਮਣੀ ਗੁਰਦੁਆਰਾ ਪ੍ਰਬੰਧਕ ਕਮੇਟੀ ਦਾ ਅੱਜ ਦਾ ਜਨਰਲ ਅਜਲਾਸ ਭਾਰਤ ਸਰਕਾਰ ਖਾਸ ਕਰਕੇ ਪ੍ਰਧਾਨ ਮੰਤਰੀ ਡਾ: ਮਨਮੋਹਨ ਸਿੰਘ ਨੂੰ ਅਪੀਲ ਕਰਦਾ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਸਿੱਖਾਂ ਦੀ ਨਿਆਰੀ ਹੋਂਦ ਅਤੇ ਪਹਿਚਾਣ, ਖਾਸ ਕਰਕੇ ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤਧਾਰੀ ਸਿੰਘ ਦੀ ਪਹਿਚਾਣ ਸੰਸਾਰ ਪੱਧਰ 'ਤੇ ਮਨਵਾਉਣ ਲਈ ਲੋੜੀਂਦੇ ਉਪਰਾਲੇ ਤੁਰੰਤ ਕੀਤੇ ਜਾਣ ਅਤੇ ਇਸ ਨਵੇਂ ਕਾਨੂੰਨ 'ਤੇ ਮੁੜ ਨਜ਼ਰਸਾਨੀ ਦੀ ਮੰਗ ਕਰਦਾ ਹੋਇਆ ਭਾਰਤ ਸਰਕਾਰ, ਅੰਤਰਰਾਸ਼ਟਰੀ ਸੰਗਠਨਾਂ ਅਤੇ ਮਨੁੱਖੀ ਅਧਿਕਾਰ ਸੰਗਠਨਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਅਪੀਲ ਕਰਦਾ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਫਰਾਂਸ ਵਿਚ ਸਿੱਖ ਬੱਚਿਆਂ ਦੇ ਦਸਤਾਰ ਸਜਾਉਣ 'ਤੇ ਲਾਈ ਗਈ ਪਾਬੰਦੀ ਵਾਪਸ ਲੈਣ ਲਈ ਫਰਾਂਸ ਸਰਕਾਰ ਨੂੰ ਜ਼ੋਰਦਾਰ ਤਰੀਕੇ ਨਾਲ ਪ੍ਰੇਰਿਆ ਜਾਵੇ।"

ਦਫਤਰ:- ਸ਼੍ਰੋਮਣੀ ਗੁਰਦੁਆਰਾ ਪ੍ਰਬੰਧਕ ਕਮੇਟੀ,

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ਤੇਜਾ ਸਿੰਘ ਸਮੁੰਦਰੀ ਹਾਲ, ਸ੍ਰੀ ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤਸਰ।

ਨੰਬਰ 20233

ਮਿਤੀ 12-4-07

ਉਤਾਰਾ:-

1. ਪ੍ਰਧਾਨ ਮੰਤਰੀ ਜੀ, ਭਾਰਤ ਸਰਕਾਰ, ਨਵੀਂ ਦਿੱਲੀ।
2. ਵਿਦੇਸ਼ ਮੰਤਰੀ ਜੀ, ਭਾਰਤ ਸਰਕਾਰ, ਨਵੀਂ ਦਿੱਲੀ।
3. ਮੁੱਖ ਸਕੱਤਰ ਜੀ ਪੰਜਾਬ ਸਰਕਾਰ, ਚੰਡੀਗੜ੍ਹ।
4. ਚੇਅਰਮੈਨ ਜੀ ਕੌਮੀ ਘੱਟ ਗਿਣਤੀਆਂ ਕਮਿਸ਼ਨ, ਨਵੀਂ ਦਿੱਲੀ।
5. ਯੂਨਾਈਟਿਡ ਨੇਸ਼ਨਜ਼ ਆਰਗੇਨਾਈਜ਼ੇਸ਼ਨ।
6. ਸਕੱਤਰ ਸਾਹਿਬ, ਸ਼੍ਰੋਮਣੀ ਗੁ:ਪ੍ਰ:ਕਮੇਟੀ।
7. ਐਡੀ:ਸਕੱਤਰ ਸਾਹਿਬ (ਟ੍ਰ) ਸ਼੍ਰੋਮਣੀ ਗੁ:ਪ੍ਰ:ਕਮੇਟੀ।
8. ਇੰਚਾਰਜ ਜੀ (ਪਬਲੀਸਿਟੀ) ਸ਼੍ਰੋਮਣੀ ਗੁ:ਪ੍ਰ:ਕਮੇਟੀ।
9. ਇੰਚਾਰਜ ਜੀ-ਰੀਕਾਰਡ ਸ਼੍ਰੋਮਣੀ ਗੁ:ਪ੍ਰ:ਕਮੇਟੀ।

(ਹਰਬੇਅੰਤ ਸਿੰਘ)

ਸਕੱਤਰ

ਸ਼੍ਰੋਮਣੀ ਗੁਰਦੁਆਰਾ ਪ੍ਰਬੰਧਕ ਕਮੇਟੀ।

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28257  
6-3-07

Dr. Manmohan Singh Ji,  
Hon'ble Prime Minister,  
Govt. Of India,  
New Delhi.

Sub:- Resolution No.11 Dated 25-11-2006.

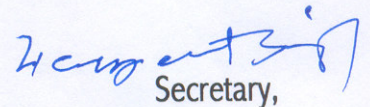
Dear Sir,

In view of the serious concerns being felt by the Sikh diaspora over their identity coming under increasing attacks from world-community, may be out of ignorance or otherwise, Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, Amritsar has passed resolution No. 11 dated 25-11-2006 (Copy enl.) calling upon the Govt. of India to launch a world-wide campaign, through diplomatic channels, to educate the world-community on fundamental principles and main features of Sikh-identity so that Sikhs do not face a crisis of identity on foreign lands.


With best regards,

Yours sincerely,

Encl: Resolution

  
Secretary,

Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee.

 Sri Amritsar.



Tele. Address:—

'SHIROMANI'

131



ੴ ਵਾਹਿਗੁਰੂ ਜੀ ਕੀ ਫਤਹ ॥

Copy of Resolution No.11 Passed by the **General House** of the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, Amritsar held on 25.11.2006

Turban is not merely a religious symbol but also a sign of distinct identity of a Sikh, a fact which has been acknowledged by the world community, and further proved and established by the exemption granted to a turbaned Sikh from wearing a helmet, in many foreign countries, in recognition of its religious significance. Even during the British rule in India, a Sikh in armed forces was required to maintain his Sikh appearance as per his religious obligation. But now it is ironical that Sikhs who fought during World Wars as part of allied forces, in their complete Sikh exterior, and also largely contributed to the freedom of France, are now being subjected to abject humiliation by France itself through a ban on turban for young and innocent Sikh students, thus violating the Human-Rights Conventions. All requests and appeals by world people were pushed under the carpet by French Govt., to the further annoyance of Sikhs. Apart from this, in some countries the Sikhs are being harassed for wearing Kirpans (small swords) through court cases, the recent example of such harassment being Denmark where an Amritdhari Sikh Ripudaman Singh was tried in court and imposed heavy fines. Moreover the Sikhs are being mistaken for Arabs and accordingly assaulted physically in western countries. All this has made life miserable for Sikhs in many countries for no fault of theirs, whatsoever.

The today's General House session, urges and appeals the Govt. of India, especially Dr. Manmohan Singh hon'ble Prime Minister, to take due notice of such discrimination against Sikhs and to initiate a diplomatic campaign to educate the world community about the distinct features of Sikh religion so that the ban on Kirpan and turban may be lifted by the respective nations.

**Certified** that above is True Copy of the Resolution contained in the **Minute Book** of the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, Amritsar which is in its custody.

21 August 2006  
**Secretary,**

Shiromani G.P. Committee,  
Amritsar.



ਤਾਰ ਦਾ ਪਤਾ:-

“ਸ਼੍ਰੋਮਣੀ”

129

ੴ ਵਾਹਿਗੁਰੂ ਜੀ ਕੀ ਫਤਹਿ ॥

ਟੈਲੀਫੋਨ

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ਸ਼੍ਰੋਮਣੀ ਗੁਰਦੁਆਰਾ ਪ੍ਰਬੰਧਕ ਕਮੇਟੀ ਦੀ ਜਨਰਲ ਕਮੇਟੀ ਦੀ ਇਕੱਤਰਤਾ ੧੨ ਮੱਘਰ, ਸੰਮਤ ੧੯੮੬ ਮੁਤਾਬਿਕ ( ੨੫-੧੧-੨੦੦੬ ) ਦੇ ਮਤਾ ਨੰਬਰ ੧੧ ਦੀ ਨਕਲ:-

"ਦਸਤਾਰ ਕੇਵਲ ਸਿੱਖਾਂ ਦਾ ਧਾਰਮਿਕ ਚਿੰਨ੍ਹ ਹੀ ਨਹੀਂ ਬਲਕਿ ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਦੀ ਨਿਆਰੀ ਅਤੇ ਵੱਖਰੀ ਪਹਿਚਾਣ ਦਾ ਚਿੰਨ੍ਹ ਵੀ ਹੈ ਵਿਸ਼ਵ ਪੱਧਰ 'ਤੇ ਸਿੱਖ ਦੀ ਪਹਿਚਾਣ ਦਸਤਾਰਧਾਰੀ ਮਨੁੱਖ ਦੇ ਰੂਪ ਵਿੱਚ ਸਥਾਪਤ ਹੋਈ ਹੈ, ਜਿਸ ਤੋਂ ਦੁਨੀਆਂ ਦਾ ਕੋਈ ਆਦਮੀ ਮੁਨਕਰ ਨਹੀਂ ਹੋ ਸਕਦਾ। ਕਈ ਬਾਹਰਲੇ ਮੁਲਕਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਕੇਵਲ ਦਸਤਾਰ ਕਰਕੇ ਹੀ ਸਿੱਖਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਡਰਾਈਵਿੰਗ ਅਤੇ ਫੈਕਟਰੀਆਂ ਵਿਚ ਸੁਰੱਖਿਆ ਟੋਪ ਪਾਉਣ ਤੋਂ ਛੋਟ ਮਿਲੀ ਹੋਈ ਹੈ ਕਿਉਂ ਕਿ ਸਿੱਖ ਧਰਮ ਸਾਬਤ ਸੂਰਤ ਦਸਤਾਰ ਸਿਰਾ ਦਾ ਧਾਰਨੀ ਹੈ। ਭਾਰਤ ਵਿਚ ਅੰਗਰੇਜ਼ਾਂ ਦੇ ਰਾਜ ਸਮੇਂ ਫੌਜਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਸਿੱਖ ਸਿਪਾਹੀ ਅਤੇ ਅਫਸਰ ਲਈ ਸਾਬਤ ਸੂਰਤ ਦਸਤਾਰਧਾਰੀ ਰਹਿਣਾ ਲਾਜ਼ਮੀ ਸੀ। ਸੰਸਾਰ ਯੁੱਧਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਵੀ ਫੌਜੀ ਸਿੱਖ ਦਸਤਾਰਧਾਰੀ ਮਨੁੱਖ ਦੇ ਰੂਪ ਵਿਚ ਹੀ ਲੜੇ ਅਤੇ ਹੋਰ ਤੇ ਹੋਰ ਫਰਾਂਸ ਲਈ ਵੀ ਜੂਝੇ ਪਰ ਅਫਸੋਸ ਦੀ ਗੱਲ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਫਰਾਂਸ ਵਿਚ ਹੀ ਸਕੂਲੀ ਬੱਚਿਆਂ ਨੂੰ ਦਸਤਾਰ ਸਜਾਉਣ ਦੇ ਬੁਨਿਆਦੀ ਅਤੇ ਧਾਰਮਿਕ ਹੱਕ ਤੋਂ ਮਹਿਰੂਮ ਕੀਤਾ ਗਿਆ ਹੈ। ਦੁਨੀਆਂ ਭਰ ਤੋਂ ਇਸ ਵਿਰੁੱਧ ਕੀਤੀਆਂ ਗਈਆਂ ਅਪੀਲਾਂ, ਦਲੀਲਾਂ ਦੀ ਪ੍ਰਵਾਹ ਨਾ ਕਰਦਿਆਂ ਸਿੱਖ ਬੱਚਿਆਂ ਦੇ ਦਸਤਾਰ ਸਜਾਉਣ 'ਤੇ ਪਾਬੰਦੀ ਲਾ ਦਿੱਤੀ ਗਈ ਹੈ। ਸੰਸਾਰ ਦੇ ਕੁਝ ਹੋਰ ਮੁਲਕਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਬੱਚਿਆਂ ਦੇ ਕ੍ਰਿਪਾਨ ਪਹਿਨਣ 'ਤੇ ਇਤਰਾਜ਼ ਕੀਤਾ ਜਾ ਰਿਹਾ ਹੈ ਅਤੇ ਕਿਧਰੇ ਉਹਨਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਮੁਸਲਮਾਨਾਂ ਨਾਲ ਰੱਲਗਡ ਕਰਕੇ ਨਫਰਤ ਦੀ ਬਲੀ ਚੜਾਇਆ ਜਾਂਦਾ ਹੈ। ਇਥੇ ਹੀ ਬੱਸ ਨਹੀਂ ਡੈਨਮਾਰਕ 'ਚ ਇਕ ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤਧਾਰੀ ਨੌਜਵਾਨ ਸਿੱਖ ਨੂੰ ਕ੍ਰਿਪਾਨ ਧਾਰਨ ਕਰਨ 'ਤੇ ਉਥੋਂ ਦੇ ਪ੍ਰਸ਼ਾਸਨ ਨੇ ਕੇਸ ਦਰਜ ਕਰਕੇ ਸਿੱਖਾਂ ਦੀ ਧਾਰਮਿਕ ਭਾਵਨਾਵਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਭਾਰੀ ਠੇਸ ਪਹੁੰਚਾਈ ਹੈ। ਇਸ ਕਾਰਵਾਈ ਉਪਰੰਤ ਉਥੋਂ ਦੀ ਅਦਾਲਤ ਨੇ ਸਿੱਖਾਂ ਦੇ ਧਾਰਮਿਕ ਚਿੰਨ੍ਹ ਨੂੰ ਗੈਰ-ਕਾਨੂੰਨੀ ਹਥਿਆਰ ਕਹਿ ਕੇ ਸਿੱਖਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਕਿਰਪਾਨ ਧਾਰਨ ਕਰਨ 'ਤੇ ਪਾਬੰਦੀ ਲਗਾ ਦਿੱਤੀ ਹੈ।

ਸ਼੍ਰੋਮਣੀ ਗੁਰਦੁਆਰਾ ਪ੍ਰਬੰਧਕ ਕਮੇਟੀ ਦਾ ਅੱਜ ਦਾ ਜਨਰਲ ਅਜਲਾਸ ਭਾਰਤ ਸਰਕਾਰ ਖਾਸ ਕਰਕੇ ਪ੍ਰਧਾਨ ਮੰਤਰੀ ਡਾ: ਮਨਮੋਹਨ ਸਿੰਘ ਨੂੰ ਅਪੀਲ ਕਰਦਾ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਸਿੱਖਾਂ ਦੀ ਨਿਆਰੀ ਹੋਂਦ ਅਤੇ ਪਹਿਚਾਣ, ਖਾਸ ਕਰਕੇ ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤਧਾਰੀ ਸਿੰਘ ਦੀ ਪਹਿਚਾਣ ਸੰਸਾਰ ਪੱਧਰ 'ਤੇ ਮਨਵਾਉਣ ਲਈ ਲੋੜੀਂਦੇ ਉਪਰਾਲੇ ਤੁਰੰਤ ਕੀਤੇ ਜਾਣ ਅਤੇ ਇਸ ਨਵੇਂ ਕਾਨੂੰਨ 'ਤੇ ਮੁੜ ਨਜ਼ਰਸਾਨੀ ਦੀ ਮੰਗ ਕਰਦਾ ਹੋਇਆ ਭਾਰਤ ਸਰਕਾਰ, ਅੰਤਰਰਾਸ਼ਟਰੀ ਸੰਗਠਨਾਂ ਅਤੇ ਮਨੁੱਖੀ ਅਧਿਕਾਰ ਸੰਗਠਨਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਅਪੀਲ ਕਰਦਾ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਫਰਾਂਸ ਵਿਚ ਸਿੱਖ ਬੱਚਿਆਂ ਦੇ ਦਸਤਾਰ ਸਜਾਉਣ 'ਤੇ ਲਾਈ ਗਈ ਪਾਬੰਦੀ ਵਾਪਸ ਲੈਣ ਲਈ ਫਰਾਂਸ ਸਰਕਾਰ ਨੂੰ ਜ਼ੋਰਦਾਰ ਤਰੀਕੇ ਨਾਲ ਪ੍ਰੇਰਿਆ ਜਾਵੇ।"

## ਦਫਤਰ:- ਸ਼੍ਰੋਮਣੀ ਗੁਰਦੁਆਰਾ ਪ੍ਰਬੰਧਕ ਕਮੇਟੀ,

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ਤੇਜਾ ਸਿੰਘ ਸਮੁੰਦਰੀ ਹਾਲ, ਸ੍ਰੀ ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤਸਰ।

ਨੰਬਰ 26460./

ਮਿਤੀ 30-11-06

ਉਤਾਰਾ:-

1. ਪ੍ਰਧਾਨ ਮੰਤਰੀ ਜੀ ਭਾਰਤ ਸਰਕਾਰ, ਨਵੀਂ ਦਿੱਲੀ।
2. ਵਿਦੇਸ਼ ਮੰਤਰੀ ਜੀ, ਭਾਰਤ ਸਰਕਾਰ, ਨਵੀਂ ਦਿੱਲੀ।
3. ਮੁੱਖ ਸਕੱਤਰ ਜੀ ਪੰਜਾਬ ਸਰਕਾਰ, ਪੰਜਾਬ, ਚੰਡੀਗੜ੍ਹ।
4. ਚੇਅਰਮੈਨ ਜੀ, ਕੌਮੀ ਘੱਟ ਗਿਣਤੀਆਂ ਕਮਿਸ਼ਨ, ਨਵੀਂ ਦਿੱਲੀ।
5. ਯੂਨਾਈਟਿਡ ਨੇਸ਼ਨਜ਼ ਆਰਗੇਨਾਈਜੇਸ਼ਨ।
6. ਮੀਤ ਸਕੱਤਰ ਜੀ (ਪਬਲੀਸਿਟੀ), ਸ਼੍ਰੋਮਣੀ ਗੁ:ਪ੍ਰ:ਕਮੇਟੀ।
7. ਇੰਚਾਰਜ ਜੀ- ਰੀਕਾਰਡ ਸ਼੍ਰੋਮਣੀ ਗੁ:ਪ੍ਰ:ਕਮੇਟੀ।

(ਹਰਬੇਅੰਤ ਸਿੰਘ)

ਸਕੱਤਰ

ਸ਼੍ਰੋਮਣੀ ਗੁਰਦੁਆਰਾ ਪ੍ਰਬੰਧਕ ਕਮੇਟੀ।

REGD.

24623

27-9-06

**His Excellency Mr. Jacques Chirac,**  
Hon'ble President,  
Republic of France,  
Paris (France).

Subject: - **Turban issue in France.**

Dear Sir,

I have the honour to draw your kind attention to my letter No.21262, dated 26.5.2005 followed by letter No.24329, dated 26.9.2005 on the above noted subject.

On a visit to U.K. sometime back I had the opportunity to meet with some Sikhs from France who felt proud in explaining the remarkable history of France and its contribution to human rights principles, democracy and freedom of conscience. They also referred to the French revolution of 1789, and the famous historic document, "The Rights of Man and Citizen of 1789", its emphasis on equality of people and freedom from forced dogma. They also informed me of the 'Laicite' law of 1905. However a predicament over their future existence in France, especially owing to a ban on turbans, was writ large on their faces, and they also felt disappointed over great expectations from the French nation due to a perceived contrast with practice. 11

A Sikh wears a turban not as per his choice but it is a mandatory wear for him as required by his religious code of conduct. The sanctity of a turban for the Sikhs is so inviolable that they spurned the replacement of turban with a helmet during world-wars, which is more than enough to prove that turban, for the Sikhs, is dearer than life. Appreciating the affinity of a Sikh towards his religious symbols, the British Parliament felt morally obliged to wave the requirement of a helmet for a Sikh. I firmly believe that the same social values as possessed by the Britons are also deeply rooted in the ethos of the French people.

Every man on earth is affiliated to some or the other religion, because any religion was formed to civilize people and provide them with a set of values, but for the French Govt., a religion instead of being regarded as a means of moral elevation, is like something casting a baneful influence.

Being president of Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, an apex representative Sikh religious body, i request your honour to review your ban on turban in the Government schools of France, which would enhance your already good image amongst Sikhs.

With deep regards,

Yours sincerely,

(Avtar Singh),

President,  
Shiromani G.P. Committee,  
Sri Amritsar.

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# Asma Jahangir for global code on religious symbols

IP Singh | TNN

**Jalandhar:** There is some solace for Sikhs fighting against the French ban on turban, with United Nations' special rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief, Asma Jahangir's recommendations on Universal Code for Religious Symbols reportedly getting wide support from members of Human Rights Council at Geneva.

"Jahangir has recommended a global code on religious symbols by categorising these as symbols of 'observance' and of 'practice' to settle the issue for ever," said Manjit Singh Randhawa, president of Sikh Nation Organisation (SNO), which had moved the Human Rights High Commissioner against the ban under '1503 Procedure', while quoting from UN documents available with him.

He told TOI that Jahangir had also submitted the report on her 'in-situ' visit to France, to investigate situation of 'human rights violations of tender aged school-going children', as reported by SNO and other NGOs.

Randhawa revealed that the Human Rights Council held a meeting on September 25, with concerned countries who are being examined under 1503 Procedure for human rights vio-

lations. Second meeting on the subject is fixed for October 2 as per schedule of ongoing session of the United Nations' highest human rights body.

While further quoting from the UN documents, he said that Doudou Diene, special rapporteur, racial discrimination and related intolerance, urged the Council that this issue required a long-term strategy, maintaining that "there should

## BAN ON TURBAN

be no dogmatism of the secular approach being used to manipulate religious freedom.

Asma Jahangir said, "Infringements on the freedom of religion or belief had to be denounced and combated at all levels of society." She expressed concern about the law, in her address to the second session of the world body which will continue till October 6.

"The implementation of the law by school establishments has in a number of cases lead to abuses that provoked feeling of humiliation, in particular against young Muslim women. According to many voices, such public humiliation can only lead to radicalisation of affected persons and those associated with them," she said.

Times of India  
28/9/06

ਜੀ ਮਾਸੀ  
28/9/06 ਜੀ ਮਾਸੀ

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# Turban stands out in French folk parade

VARINDER SINGH  
TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

JALANDHAR, SEPTEMBER 23

Though the French authorities have banned students from sporting religious symbols, including the turban, in French schools, the French people still accord full respect to turbaned Sikhs.

They are also "aware that Sikhs are an integral part of the world mainstream" and that their turbans are symbols of spirituality and a distinct identity of the Sikh community.

This was revealed by Mr Davinder Singh Chinna, Director of the Ludhiana-based Punjab Cultural Promotion Council (PCPC) and a member of the International Sport Cultural Association (ISCA), based at Copenhagen in Denmark.

Mr Chinna was part of a team from Punjab that participated in the 47th Festival International De Folklore De Montrejeau, in France last month. The team also toured a number of European countries, including Spain, to promote Punjab heritage and Sikh culture.

Mr Parminder Singh Nona, a choreographer, Mr Bhupinder Singh Vicky, Mr Ropan, Mr Vikramjit Singh, Ms Paramjit Kaur, Ms Amandeep Singh Saimbhi,



Mr Davinder Singh Chinna, Director of the PCPC, being awarded with a Diploma D' Honneur by Mr Robert Pons, Mayor of Montrejeau city of France, during a visit of a team from Punjab to France.

Ms Pooja and Ms Navjot Kaur Sandhu, were the other members of the team. Mr Emil Dimitrov, Overseas coordinator of the PCPC (Europe Chapter), was also part of the team.

"Common French people, students and artistes showed full respect to the turbaned youth from Punjab. We believe that their response to the turban will convince the French authorities about the dignity of the turban and to realise that the French government decision on the turban needs to be reconsidered," said Mr Chinna.

He further added that "Turle Walian Paggan

stood out among nearly 500 participants from France, Turkey, Slovakia, Bulgaria, Brittany, Spain, Scotland, Israel, Italy and other countries during the international folk parade, organised on the occasion". Claiming that he was awarded with a Diploma D' Honneur by the French government for his role in international cooperation and efforts towards strengthening of international friendship and peace, he said: "I believe that common French people are intensely tolerant and my chats with them revealed that they had nothing against the turban."

# No change, French defend turban ban

Gurpreet Singh Nibber  
Patiala, September 22

IN ITS reply to the report submitted by United Nations Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief Asma Jahangir on the ban on wearing religious symbols, including turbans, the French government has defended the move saying it was aimed at bringing all the primary and high school students at par with each other.

The issue was taken up yesterday by the UN Human Rights Council which is in its second session in Geneva.

French diplomat Jean Maurice Ripert's reply indicates that there has been a little change in his government's stance on the issue despite the law coming in for criticism from all quarters. UN committees on the Rights of the Child and Elimination of Racial Dis-

crimination in their observations expressed concern that the French law could prove to be counter-productive by neglecting the principle of right of child to education.

The 45-member Council heard the French ban law along with the issue of right violations in other countries. Asma had travelled to different countries, including France, to investigate rights violation in these countries.

Speaking before the Council, she raised serious concern over the French law, saying, "...another religious minority that has been seriously affected by the adoption of law is the Sikh community". The French representative, however, justified the move, saying the law was only applicable to school students, and not to those going to the universities.

Ending his brief reply,

Ripert said the French government was conscious about protecting the rights of the people living in France. Asma, meanwhile, said during her visit to France, members of the Sikh community told her that displaying religious symbols was essential part of their faith. "They described painful experiences they endured when their children had to cut their hair as a result of rigid application of law by some schools," she said. It was difficult to assess the exact number of students who had decided to quit schools after the enactment of the law, she submitted.

Dr Manjit Singh Randhawa of Sikh Nations Organisation, who had filed a petition before the UN, said the stubborn stance of the French government would harm the country's reputation for withholding human rights.

Hindustan Times

28/9/06

- (1) Religion was formed to civilize people and provide them with a set of values.
- (2) Even, Napoleon, on whose code, the French Constitution is primarily based, conceded that a society without a religion is like a ship without a compass; there is no good morality without religion.

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As president of Shiromani Gurdwara Parbhandik Committee, the most representative organisation of Sikhs which manages historic Sikh institutions, I urge you to consider the implementation of your plans and rule. I also request you to reconsider the issue in order to enable the Sikhs of France to be the proud residents of France that they aspired to be.

The SGPC is authorising Dr Jasdev Singh Rai from UK to assist the Sikhs in France and to start a dialogue with your nation on our behalf. We look forward to resolving this issue through a better understanding and appreciation of our mutual positions.

Yours Sincerely

Sardar Avtar Singh  
President  
Shiromani Gurdwara Parbhandik Committee

Cc to the Ambassador, Republic of France  
His Excellency, Ambassadeur  
Ministry  
Andre Malraux Marg  
2/50 Shantipath  
Chanakyapuri  
New Delhi

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The President  
Republic of France  
The Elysee Palace  
Paris, France

Dear President Jacques Chirac

Re: Sikhs in France.

On a recent visit to UK, I had the opportunity to meet with some Sikhs from France who proudly explained the remarkable history of France and its contribution to human rights principles, democracy and freedom of conscience. They told me about the French revolution of 1789, and the famous historic document, The Rights of Man and Citizen of 1789, its emphasis on equality of people and freedom from forced dogma. They also informed me of the 'Laicite' law of 1905. However they also explained their current predicament living in France and their confusion about their great expectations from the French nation and the perceived contrast with practice.

It may interest you that some of the institutional Sikhi evolved in India at about the same time and share some of the principles that inspire the French nation. One of the major dates in the Sikh calendar is 13<sup>th</sup> April 1699 when power of decision was passed to the mass and a system of governance based on consensus was formed. Human dignity, freedom of conscience and independence from imposed dogmas have been key principles for which the Sikh people have fought many battles through history. Pluralism and consensus are the basis of the Sikh outlook on life.

It is therefore with some distress I heard the continuing difficulties that Sikhs face in France cannot but feel that there is a lack of understanding about Sikhs, Sikhi and some of the shared principles between the two historic movements.

I also feel that these misunderstandings may have contributed to the current difficulties between the Sikhs in France and State policies. I particularly refer to the issue of wearing of turbans by Sikhs and the apparent conflict with French laws.

I use the word apparent as I feel that misunderstandings need to be removed on all sides through dialogue and a better appreciation of the principles that underlie the practices on all sides. It is significant that France was one of the countries that encouraged and signed up to Para 67 at the World Conference against Racism in Durban which resolved this difficulty. The Sikhs are therefore surprised at the current dilemma in France.

21/9/00

121

# UN panel to take up turban ban issue today

**Gurpreet Singh Nibber**  
Patiala, September 20

THE UNITED Nations Human Right Council will take up tomorrow the French ban on wearing turban and other religious symbols in public places, including schools. UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion and Belief Asma Jahangir, who reports on violations of religious freedom around the world, would present a report based on her investigation to the 45-member Council.

The Council, in its second session after it came into being on March 15 this year to replace UN Commission on Human Rights, will hear reports of special procedure, including special rapporteurs, experts and working groups. The session, which got underway on September 18, will continue till October 6.

The French government in March 2004 came up with a law banning use of conspicuous religious symbols. It was implemented in September 2004. Immediately after, seven Sikhs students were refused entry in government school for wearing turbans and kirpans and



**Asma Jahangir**  
*UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion and Belief*

were later suspended.

In her findings, Asma says, "... the law denies the right to those teenagers who have freely chosen to wear a religious symbol in school as part of their religious belief. In particular, the law denies innocent expression of religious belief even if it is conspicuous as in the case of Sikh children."

In her report, Asma has called for adoption of universal and uniform code to respect sanctity of religious symbols by categorising these as of observance and practice.

Among her recommendations, she has asked the

French government to take appropriate measures to better inform school authorities and more generally the French public about the exact nature and purpose of law. It should be made clear that the wearing or display of religious symbols is an essential part of the right to manifest one's religion or belief that can only be limited in precise conditions, says Asma, who spent eight days in Paris and met representatives of the Sikh community.

The government, which is primarily responsible for protecting people against violations of the right to freedom of religion or belief, rarely organises intergovernmental events to discuss the rise of religious intolerance, she has said.

Patiala resident Dr Manjith Singh Randhawa had moved the UN right's body against the move in March 17, 2004. He also sent a representation to the General Assembly president. The matter was studied and handed over to Asma, who, as per reports, visited France to collect evidence. Dr Randhawa says the issue would again come up for second closed and final hearing within this session.

132/2004

## The Battle of Saragarhi

IN recalling the Battle of Saragarhi fought on Sept 12, 1897 (Sept 12), Pritam Bhullar has kept alive the dictum that "soldering is the profession of the living and the dead". Implying that the soldiers who are trained, motivated and launched of the battlefield are the "living". And those who fall in the call to duty, their brave deeds are then honoured and remembered by their comrades, for all times.

The 20 soldiers of 4 Sikh who died fighting at Saragarhi to the last man accounted 450 of the enemy in dead and wounded. The last of the defenders to go down fighting was Gurmukh Singh, the "Signaller" who had kept his commanding officer posted all along with a blow-by-blow account of the action as it was being fought out. And that became

the recorded Regimental History of this epic battle. Little wonder that the House of Commons, London, stood to a man in ovation to the war braves of 4 Sikh!

Recorded history apart, I have occasionally heard from old soldiers that the Battle of Saragarhi had found a place in the school texts in France in the 1920s as an example of supreme valour on the battlefield. And that in more recent times in UNESCO publication, Saragarhi figured among the eight most epic and gallant battles.

Can any reader of The Tribune authenticate the above oral history by way of recorded narratives he/she may have come across?

Lieut-Gen BALJIT SINGH (ret'd),  
Chandigarh

CCO

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# ਫਰਾਂਸ ਵਿਚ ਚਾਰ ਸਿੱਖ ਮੁੰਡਿਆਂ ਨਾਲ ਅਛੂਤਾਂ ਵਾਲਾ ਸਲੂਕ

19 ਸਤੰਬਰ/ਦੇਸ਼ ਸੇਵਕ ਬਿਊਰੋ

ਫਰਾਂਸ ਦੇ ਸਰਕਾਰੀ ਸਕੂਲਾਂ 'ਚ ਪੱਗ 'ਤੇ ਖੋਲ੍ਹੇ ਦਿੱਤੇ ਆਉਣ ਵਾਲੇ ਹੱਲ ਹੁੰਦੇ ਨਹੀਂ ਆ ਰਿਹਾ ਬਲਕਿ ਇਸ ਦੇ ਨਵੇਂ ਪ੍ਰਭਾਵ ਸਾਹਮਣੇ ਆ ਰਹੇ ਹਨ। ਰਿਪੋਰਟਾਂ ਮੁਤਾਬਿਕ ਇਥੇ 4 ਵਿਦਿਆਰਥੀਆਂ ਨੂੰ ਸਕੂਲ 'ਚ ਵਿਦਿਆਰਥੀਆਂ ਤੋਂ ਵੱਖ ਰੱਖਿਆ ਰਹਾ ਹੈ। ਇਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਅਛੂਤਾਂ ਵਾਂਗ ਬੱਚਿਆਂ ਨਾਲ ਵੱਖ ਕਰ ਕੇ ਇਕੱਲੇ ਰੋਮਾਂ 'ਚ ਰੱਖਿਆ ਜਾ ਰਿਹਾ ਹੈ। ਇਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਕਲਾਸ ਵਿਚ ਬੈਠਣ ਦੀ ਇਜਾਜ਼ਤ ਨਹੀਂ ਦਿੱਤੀ ਜਾ ਰਹੀ ਕਿਉਂਕਿ ਇਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਨੇ ਪੱਗ ਤੇ ਪਟਕਾ ਉਤਾਰਨ ਤੋਂ ਨਕਾਰ ਕਰ ਦਿੱਤਾ ਹੈ। ਇਨ੍ਹਾਂ 4 ਵਿਦਿਆਰਥੀਆਂ 'ਚੋਂ ਇੱਕ ਜਸਮੀਤ ਦਾ ਕਹਿਣਾ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਜੇਕਰ ਉਹ ਪਟਕਾ ਬੰਨ੍ਹਣਾ ਜਾਰੀ ਰੱਖਦਾ ਹੈ ਉਸ ਨੂੰ ਸਕੂਲ ਤੋਂ ਕੱਢ ਦਿੱਤਾ ਜਾਵੇਗਾ।

ਜਿੱਥੇ ਇਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਵਿਦਿਆਰਥੀਆਂ ਨੂੰ ਕਲਾਸ 'ਚ ਆਉਣ ਦੀ ਇਜਾਜ਼ਤ ਨਹੀਂ ਦਿੱਤੀ ਜਾ ਰਹੀ, ਉੱਥੇ ਦੂਜੇ ਪਾਸੇ ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਦੇ ਸਹਿਪਾਠੀਆਂ ਨੂੰ ਇਹ ਨਹੀਂ ਪਤਾ ਕਿ ਉਹ ਪਿਛਲੇ 2 ਹਫ਼ਤਿਆਂ ਤੋਂ ਸਕੂਲ ਆ ਰਹੇ ਹਨ। ਜਸਮੀਤ ਦੀ ਇੱਕ ਜਮਾਤ ਨੇ ਦੱਸਿਆ ਕਿ ਫਰਾਂਸ ਦੇ ਸਕੂਲਾਂ 'ਚ ਇਹ ਵੱਡੀ ਸਮੱਸਿਆ ਬਣ ਚੁੱਕੀ ਹੈ। ਸਰਕਾਰੀ ਸਕੂਲਾਂ 'ਚ ਪੜ੍ਹਨ ਵਾਲੇ ਬੱਚਿਆਂ ਕੋਲ ਹੋਰ ਕੋਈ ਬਦਲ ਨਹੀਂ ਬਚਦਾ। ਮੈਂ ਨਹੀਂ ਚਾਹੁੰਦੀ ਕਿ ਉਸ ਨੂੰ ਪੱਗ ਜਾਂ ਪਟਕਾ ਬੰਨ੍ਹਣ ਤੋਂ ਰੋਕਿਆ ਜਾਣ ਪਰ ਜਸਮੀਤ ਤੇ ਉਸ ਦੇ ਸਾਥੀਆਂ ਕੋਲ ਹੋਰ ਕੋਈ ਰਸਤਾ ਨਹੀਂ ਬਚਦਾ ਹੈ। ਇੱਕ ਹੋਰ ਬੱਚਾ ਜਿਸ ਨੂੰ ਪੱਗ ਅਤੇ ਟੋਪੀ ਵਿਚਾਲੇ ਫਰਕ ਨਹੀਂ ਪਤਾ ਸੀ, ਦਾ ਕਹਿਣਾ ਸੀ ਕਿ ਜਦੋਂ ਉਹ ਸਕੂਲ ਆਉਣ ਤਾਂ ਉਹ ਆਪਣੇ ਧਰਮ ਬਾਰੇ ਨਾ ਭੁੱਲਣਾ, ਪਰ ਉਹ ਪੱਗ ਬੰਨ੍ਹ ਕੇ ਸਕੂਲ ਤੋਂ ਆਉਣਾ। ਸਕੂਲ ਅੰਦਰ ਆਉਣ ਸਮੇਂ ਉਹ ਇਸ ਨੂੰ ਉਤਾਰ ਦੇਣ ਅਤੇ ਜਾਣ ਸਮੇਂ ਮੁੜ



ਬੰਨ੍ਹ ਲੈਣ। ਉਸ ਬੱਚੇ ਨੇ ਬੜੇ ਹੀ ਭੁੱਲੇਪਣ 'ਚ ਕਿਹਾ ਕਿ ਉਸ ਨੂੰ ਪੱਗਾ ਯਕੀਨ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਰੱਬ ਇਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਬੱਚਿਆਂ ਨਾਲ ਨਰਾਜ਼ ਨਹੀਂ ਹੋਵੇਗਾ। ਪਰ ਇਸ ਮਾਮਲੇ 'ਤੇ ਵੱਖ-ਵੱਖ ਸਕੂਲਾਂ ਦੇ ਸਿੱਖ ਵਿਦਿਆਰਥੀ ਹੁਣ ਇਕੱਠੇ ਵੀ ਹੋਣ ਲੱਗ ਪਏ ਹਨ। ਉਹ ਸਮੱਸਿਆ ਨਾਲ ਨਿਪਟਣ ਦੀਆਂ ਵਿਚਾਰਾਂ ਕਰਦੇ ਹਨ। ਧਾਰਮਿਕ ਚਿੰਨ੍ਹ ਖਿਲਾਫ ਫਰਾਂਸ ਦੇ ਕਾਨੂੰਨ ਤੋਂ ਪੀੜਤ ਵਿਦਿਆਰਥੀ ਹਰਦੀਪ ਸਿੰਘ ਨੇ ਦੱਸਿਆ ਕਿ ਉਸ ਨੂੰ ਵੱਖਰੇ ਕਮਰੇ

'ਚ ਇਕੱਲਾ ਬਿਠਾਇਆ ਜਾਂਦਾ ਹੈ। ਉਸ ਨੂੰ ਕੁਝ ਕੰਮ ਕਰਨ ਲਈ ਦੇ ਦਿੱਤਾ ਜਾਂਦਾ ਹੈ। ਉਸ ਕੋਲ ਇਹ ਹੱਕ ਨਹੀਂ ਕਿ ਉਹ ਦੂਜੇ ਵਿਦਿਆਰਥੀਆਂ ਵਾਂਗ ਜਮਾਤ 'ਚ ਬੈਠ ਸਕੇ। ਤੀਜੇ ਵਿਦਿਆਰਥੀ ਮਹਾਂ ਸਿੰਘ ਦਾ ਕਹਿਣਾ ਹੈ ਕਿ 15 ਮਿੰਟ ਦੀ ਛੁੱਟੀ ਦੌਰਾਨ ਵੀ ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਦੂਜੇ ਵਿਦਿਆਰਥੀਆਂ ਨਾਲ ਮਿਲਣ ਦੀ ਇਜਾਜ਼ਤ ਨਹੀਂ ਹੈ। ਸਿੱਖ ਬੱਚਿਆਂ ਨੂੰ ਦੂਜੇ ਵਿਦਿਆਰਥੀਆਂ ਤੋਂ ਵੱਖਰਾ ਰੱਖੇ ਜਾਣ ਸਬੰਧੀ ਪੁੱਛੇ ਜਾਣ 'ਤੇ ਸਕੂਲ ਪ੍ਰਬੰਧਕਾਂ ਨੇ ਕਿਹਾ ਕਿ ਉਹ ਸਾਰਾ ਕੁਝ ਕਾਨੂੰਨ ਮੁਤਾਬਿਕ ਕਰ ਰਹੇ ਹਨ। ਇਸ ਲਈ ਉਹ ਕਿਸੇ ਤਰ੍ਹਾਂ ਦੀ ਟਿੱਪਣੀ ਨਹੀਂ ਕਰਨਗੇ। ਯੂਨਾਇਟਡ ਸਿਖਜ਼ ਫੋਰਮ ਦੇ ਆਗੂ ਕੁਦਰਤ ਸਿੰਘ ਨੇ ਦੱਸਿਆ ਕਿ ਫਰਾਂਸ ਸਰਕਾਰ ਵੱਲੋਂ ਭਾਵੇਂ ਸਕੂਲਾਂ ਦੇ ਮਾਹੌਲ ਨੂੰ ਧਰਮ ਨਿਰਪੱਖਤਾ ਵਾਲਾ ਰੱਖਣ ਲਈ ਇਹ ਕਾਨੂੰਨ ਬਣਾਇਆ ਗਿਆ ਸੀ ਪਰ ਇਸ ਨੇ ਬਹੁਤ ਸਾਰੇ ਫਿਰਕਿਆਂ ਲਈ ਮੁਸ਼ਕਿਲਾਂ ਪੈਦਾ ਕਰ ਦਿੱਤੀਆਂ ਹਨ। ਕੁਦਰਤ ਸਿੰਘ ਨੇ ਕਿਹਾ ਕਿ ਅਸਲ 'ਚ

ਫਰਾਂਸ ਸਰਕਾਰ ਨੇ ਉਕਤ ਕਾਨੂੰਨ ਨਾਲ ਦੂਜੇ ਸਭਿਆਚਾਰਾਂ ਤੇ ਧਾਰਮਿਕ ਵਿਰਾਸਤ ਨੂੰ ਖਤਮ ਕਰਨ ਦੀ ਸਾਜਿਸ਼ ਕੀਤੀ ਹੈ। ਉਹ ਨਾ ਸਿੱਖ ਧਰਮ ਬਾਰੇ ਜਾਣਦੇ ਹਨ ਅਤੇ ਨਾ ਸਮਝਣ ਦੀ ਇੱਛਾ ਰੱਖਦੇ ਹਨ। ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਨੇ ਬਸ ਕਾਨੂੰਨ ਦੇ ਨਾਂ 'ਤੇ ਦੂਜੇ ਸਭਿਆਚਾਰਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਦਬਾਅ ਦਿੱਤਾ ਹੈ। ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਕਿਹਾ ਕਿ ਜਿਹੜੇ ਸਕੂਲ ਪ੍ਰਬੰਧਕ ਸਿੱਖਾਂ ਦੀ ਸਮੱਸਿਆ ਸਮਝਦੇ ਹਨ, ਉਹ ਸਿੱਖਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਇਸ ਕਾਨੂੰਨ ਤੋਂ ਛੋਟ ਦੇਣ ਤੋਂ ਭਰਦੇ ਹਨ ਕਿ ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਖਿਲਾਫ ਹੀ ਕੋਈ ਕਾਰਵਾਈ ਨਾ ਹੋ ਜਾਵੇ। ਪਰ ਜਿਹੜੇ ਬੱਚੇ ਕਈ ਹਫ਼ਤਿਆਂ ਜਾਂ ਮਹੀਨਿਆਂ ਤੋਂ ਸਕੂਲਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਅਛੂਤਾਂ ਵਾਂਗ ਵੱਖਰੇ ਕਰ ਦਿੱਤੇ ਗਏ ਹਨ, ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਲਈ ਇਹ ਸਮਾ ਬਹੁਤ ਹੀ ਔਖਾ ਤੇ ਸੋਕਣਮਈ ਹੈ। ਸਿਰਫ ਕਾਨੂੰਨ ਦੇ ਨਾਂ 'ਤੇ ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਦੇ ਧਾਰਮਿਕ ਹੱਕਾਂ ਦਾ ਘਾਟ ਕੀਤਾ ਜਾ ਰਿਹਾ ਹੈ। ਇੱਕ ਹੋਰ ਬੱਚੇ ਦੇ ਪਿਤਾ ਨੇ ਕਿਹਾ ਕਿ ਸਿੱਖੀ ਸਾਡੀ ਜ਼ਿੰਦਗੀ ਹੈ, ਅਸੀਂ ਆਪਣੀ ਵਿਰਾਸਤ ਪਛਾਣ ਨੂੰ ਕਿਵੇਂ ਛੱਡ ਦੇਈਏ।

2/10/88