

GURMAT STUDY

Using Technology, To Spread the message of Sikhism

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CHHABIYAN DA MORCHA

Before the formation of the SGPC, the Darbar Sahib - Harmandar Sahib, Amritsar was governed by Mahants. As the Mahants were compelled to leave the Harmandar Sahib, the keys were handed over to the British colonial rulers. The keys to Darbar Sahib's "Tosha Khana" (Panthic treasury) were seized by the Deputy Commissioner on Nov. 7, 1921. The agitation to recover the keys is known as "Chabiyaan Da Morcha". This agitation resulted in the eventual return of the keys on Jan. 19, 1922. The keys were returned to Baba Kharak Singh, President of SGPC, during active Diwan in front of the Akal Takht, by District Authorities, Amritsar.

During October 1920 the management came under control of Sikhs. Sunder Singh Ramgarhia, a member of Gurdwara Parbandhak committee was nominated by British as controller to manage the affairs of Darbar Sahib. He was in possession of all the keys (53) already including those of TOSHAKHANA (treasury). Sikhs felt that whatever the case may be, still the nominal official control remained with the Government.

Shiromani Gurdwara committee decided on October 20th 1921 that Sunder Singh Ramgarhia should hand over the keys to President of the committee. But deputy commissioner Amritsar intervened to stop this transaction of keys. Following this move, Amar Nath extra assistance commissioner raided the house of Sunder Singh Ramgarhia on 7th of November 1921 with police escort and took away the keys. This action of the Government was uncalled for and Sikhs decided to do something about it.

Sikhs held a meeting to decide further course of action, which was addressed by prominent Sikh leaders like Baba Kharak Singh. But Government remained adamant on the issue refusing to hand over the keys. Sikhs gathered at Ajnala on 26th November 1921 to address a gathering in this connection where two prominent Sikh leaders were arrested.

Then 50 members of the Shiromani Gurdwara Committee at Akal Takhat decided to go to Ajnala and hold a Divan (congregation) there. Government arrested the prominent Sikhs, like Baba Kharak Singh, Mehtab Singh and Sunder Singh Lyalpuri after declaring their meeting as illegal.

During the prosecution in that case in the court of Mr. Conor, Baba Kharak Singh made bold statement against the British authorities. To quote an extract, "As the Government is a party to this prosecution and the Judge is one of its servants, I, therefore, do not wish to make any statement. My position as President of the Sikh Panth is like that of the President of the United States, France and Germany" (Quoted by Mohinder Singh, "The Akali Struggle", pp. 50-51).

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All Sikhs were called upon by Shiromani Committee to condemn the official action and observe 4th December as protest day. Government started cracking down on protesting Sikhs and arrested many including prominent leaders. But soon the Government realized that it could have detrimental effect on peasantry and Sikh soldiers and would create troubles.

Ultimately the Government gave in and sent an official with keys wrapped with respect in a red silk cloth.

The keys were properly handed over to Baba Kharak Singh the President Shiromani Parbandhak Committee in a Divan at Akal Takhat on 19th January 1922. It was a great achievement and a big victory over the administration.



This victory was hailed throughout the country. Mahatma Gandhi sent a telegram to the Committee, "First decisive battle for India's freedom has been won".

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