

16 AUGUST 2015

Vahiguru ji ka Khalsa, Vahiguru ji ki Fateh

(Hail the Khalsa who belongs to the Lord God! Hail the Lord God to whom belongs the victory!)

Statement from Protesters

These protests are not something that are ever undertaken lightly.

All protests are done with a heavy-heart, there is no winners in these confrontations at our holy institutions.

However, we feel that the long established extremist dictatorships that are in charge of our Gurdwaras have a devious agenda to push an adulterated version of the Sikh Reht Marydha.

We feel these extremists have one goal in mind; to financial exploit the ceremonies with little or no regard to upholding their sanctity.

We take the view that these extremist committee dictatorships have an agenda to sever the Panth, along the lines of caste and Reht with the goal to continue a revenue stream funded by misguided sympathisers of their agenda.

The Reht Maryadha (Code of Conduct) was agreed upon by the scholars of the Sikh faith and was finalised by the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, Sri Amritsar in 1940's, after 25 years of deliberation. This Reht Maryadha consolidates the teaching and scriptures of the Sikh Dharm and has been universally agreed upon by all Scholars and respected Sikh Institutions over the last 80 years.

This Reht Maryadha is the very basic guidelines for all Sikh institutions who host the presence of Shri Guru Granth Sahib jee.

The Reht Maryadha cannot be compromised, it is the very fundamentals of the Sikh faith, and many Sikhs find acts of deliberate distortion as blasphemy.

Incident at Lozells Gurdwara.

Facts on behalf of some Protesters

1. The Protesters arrived at 9am very small in number, with the aim to establish a dialogue with the committee and family to ensure the Reht Maryadha was indeed correctly followed.

At this stage, it was understood that,

i. The couple were already wedded via a Civil Marriage and were indeed already husband & wife. So the focus of this day was the religious ceremony of Anand Karaj. The Anand Karaj is not recognised as a "Wedding" in the eyes of the law, therefore the notion that the protests came to "stop a wedding" is incorrect.

ii. It was established that the Husband had not followed the correct guidelines, and did not have "Singh" in his driving licence or Passport (strict criteria as per Sri Akal Thakt Sahib). These papers were requested by the Police from the committee in the hope to diffuse a potential protest.

iii. It was understood that the committee and the family had a meeting a week earlier. They understood that the guidelines were in violation and that they could expect a protest. Therefore they agreed that they would hire approximately 8 security guards. The guards had not been warned of this potential protest and seemed very confused on the day.

2. As the word of a potential protest began circulating on Social media, more people began entering the Gurdwara. Many of the protesters were not known to each other.

3. The protest began in a calm manner, as "Satnam Waheguru" was recited for approximately 20~30 mins.

4. As expected in such situations, curious members of the families and committee members started heated exchanges with the protesters. This was largely controlled and amicable, and the vast majority of this was captured on a professional camera set up by someone from the Protest.

5. There were several provocative and abusive comments made on behalf of the elders which have been captured on video. One of which has unfortunately made its way on social media. We feel this was a deliberate attempt to provoke violent reactions. Fortunately this abuse was not reacted to.

6. The Police had the situation under control, and had allocated an area for the protesters in the lobby, as the families continued uninterrupted in the Langar hall.

7. About an hour into the protest some frustrated committee members decided to push, punch and kick the protesters out of the area. This reaction caught everyone by surprise and caused the police to rush over and intervene.

8. During this incident a woman Police Officer, WPC Fern was punched and kicked several times, by committee members as she bravely stood to protect the protesters. This incident can be verified by the Police and is also likely to have been caught on camera. This incident lasted about 30 seconds.

9. Whilst this was going on, further protesters arrived, (hearing via social media). These protesters were unable to enter the Gurdwara and remained in the car park on the instructions of the Police

10. The Protesters firmly deny any acts of Provocations, assaults or any thuggish behaviour.

11. We want the wider community to acknowledge this is at least the 2nd protest at this Gurdwara, which is run by a caste based extremist dictatorship. During the previous protest (in 2013) the committee assured the protesters that these Sham Anand Karaj's would stop.

IMPORTANT NOTES THAT NEED EMPHASISING:

THE PROTEST WAS NOT AGAINST THE WEDDING WHICH HAD ALREADY TAKEN PLACE. THE PROTEST WAS AGAINST THE ABUSE OF THE ANAND KARAJ, (A RELIGIOUS CEREMONY).

WE HAVE NEVER OPPOSED ANY RELATIONSHIP NOR HOLD THE VIEW THAT 2 PEOPLE OF DIFFERENT FAITHS CANNOT MARRY.

WE TAKE NO PLEASURE ON UNDERTAKING SUCH PROTESTS. THEY ARE DONE SO WITH A HEAVY HEART.

DURING SUCH EMOTIONALLY CHARGED SITUATIONS THERE IS ALWAYS LIKELY TO BE HEATED EXCHANGES. WE DENY ANY USE OF INFLAMMATORY WORDS OR ACTIONS.

PLEASE ACKNOWLEDGE THESE PROTESTS ARE NOT ORGANISED BY ANY INDIVIDUAL OR ORGANISATION. THEY ARE MADE UP OF ALL SIKHS WHO ATTEND UPON HEARING ON SOCIAL MEDIA ETC. MANY OF THE PROTESTERS ARE NOT KNOWN TO EACH OTHER.

WE ASK WHY THE COMMITTEE RISKED JEOPARDISING THIS COUPLES DAY, KNOWING PROTESTS LIKE THIS HAVE PREVIOUS OCCURRED?

WE REMIND PEOPLE THAT THE PROTESTERS ARE OUR YOUNGSTERS, AS A LOVING COMMUNITY WE NEED TO ASK OURSELVES WHY SHOULD THEY EVEN HAVE THE NEED TO PROTEST??

SURELY THE COMMITTEES ACTIONS IS A CATALYST THAT CAUSES SO MUCH DISTRESS TO SO MANY PEOPLE.

WE LOVE ALL CASTE CREEDS COLOURS, WE RESPECT EVERY ONE'S RIGHT TO MAKE THEIR OWN LIFESTYLE CHOICES AND MARRY WHO EVERY THEY WISH. OUR AGENDA IS PRESERVING THE VERY HOLY RELIGIOUS CEREMONY OF ANAND KARAJ, AND NOT TO INTERFERE WITH PEOPLES LIVES.

PEACE & LOVE

GURU RAKHA