

2026:PHHC:047726



IN THE HIGH COURT FOR THE STATES OF PUNJAB AND
HARYANA AT CHANDIGARH

CRM-M-12246-2026 (O&M)

Manjit Singh

...Petitioner

Versus

State of Punjab

...Respondent

Sr. No.	Particulars	Details
1	The date when the judgment is reserved	18.03.2026
2	The date when the judgment is pronounced	27.03.2026
3	The date when the judgment is uploaded on the website	27.03.2026
4	Whether only operative part of the judgment is pronounced or full judgment is pronounced	Full
5	The delay, if any, of the pronouncement of full judgment, and reasons thereof	Not applicable

CORAM: HON'BLE MRS. JUSTICE MANISHA BATRA

Present:- Mr. Prateek Sodhi, Advocate
for the petitioner.

Mr. P. I. P. Singh, Addl. A.G., Punjab.

Mr. Pradeep Virk, Senior Advocate with
Ms. Kamaldeep Kaur, Advocate
for the complainant.

MANISHA BATRA, J.

1. Prayer in this petition, filed under Section 482 of Bharatiya
Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023 (*for short 'BNSS'*), is for grant of anticipatory
bail to the petitioner in case bearing FIR No.168 dated 07.12.2025, registered
under Sections 295, 295-A, 408, 409, 465 and 120-B of IPC and Section 5 of
Jagat Jot Shri Guru Granth Sahib Satkar Act, 2008 (Sections 466, 467, 468 and
471 of IPC added later on) at Police Station Division-C, District Police

2026:PHHC:047726



Commissionerate Amritsar.

2. Brief facts of the case relevant for the purpose of disposal of this petition are that the abovementioned FIR has been registered at the instance of complainant Baldev Singh, representative of 'Sikh Sadbhavna Dal', alleging therein that 328 sacred saroops (holy books) of 'Shri Guru Granth Sahib Ji', which were in the custody of 'Shriomani Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee', Sri Amritsar Sahib, were found missing in 2016. It is alleged that the petitioner in connivance with other accused persons was involved in unauthorized printing, distribution, disappearance and mishandling of sacred saroops, misappropriation and commission of a fraud, worth Rs.9,82,700/-, with the institution. It has also been alleged that evidence pertaining to abovementioned acts has been destroyed and the religious sentiments of Sikh community have been hurt. The abovesaid allegations are based upon the report of the fact-finding/inquiry Committee constituted by the Shriomani Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee (*for short* 'SGPC'), Sri Amritsar Sahib. After registration of the FIR, investigation proceedings have been initiated. During the course of investigation, it was found that the petitioner was working as Secretary with the SGPC, who is alleged to have been responsible for supervising the concerned work relating to handling and record maintenance of sacred Saroops and associated accounts. Apprehending his arrest, the petitioner had filed an application seeking concession of anticipatory bail before the Court of learned Additional Sessions Judge, Amritsar. Vide order dated 12.12.2025, passed by the said Court, the arrest of the petitioner was stayed till 18.12.2025. However, subsequently, on 20.12.2025, his bail application was dismissed.

2026:PHHC:047726



3. It has been argued by learned counsel for the petitioner that he has been falsely implicated in this case. He had joined as a Clerk with the SGPC and retired in the year 2023 from the post of Secretary with unblemished record. The petitioner has been made a scapegoat due to the connivance and illegal acts of certain higher officials in a case relating to the alleged misappropriation of sarroops of Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji. The petitioner has no concern whatsoever with the alleged misappropriation, which is stated to have occurred during the period from the year 2011 to 2016, when the petitioner had no connection of any kind with the Printing Department. Rather, he had been diligently performing his assigned duties and had been reporting all relevant proceedings and incidents to senior officers from time to time. As per the records of the SGPC itself, the petitioner had no role in the alleged missing sarroops. It is pointed out that a news item dated 31.05.2020 reported that 257 sarroops were missing, following which the matter was referred to Akal Takhat Sahib and an inquiry committee was constituted. However, the petitioner was never called to join the inquiry proceedings, was not apprised of any allegations, nor was his statement ever recorded. The said inquiry committee allegedly submitted its report on 23.08.2020 indicting the petitioner, though a copy of the same was never furnished to him. Thereafter, the petitioner was suspended on 28.08.2020 and later served with a chargesheet dated 21.10.2022, to which he submitted a detailed reply on 27.10.2022. Despite this and without affording proper opportunity of hearing, the petitioner was compulsorily retired w.e.f. 30.09.2023. The findings against the petitioner were only of alleged negligence.

2026:PHHC:047726



4. It is further argued by learned counsel for the petitioner that a bare perusal of the FIR reveals that it is vague, devoid of particulars and does not attribute any specific role to the petitioner. Even as per the departmental proceedings, the petitioner was never accused of misappropriation but only of negligence. Moreover, the SGPC itself has never alleged that the petitioner committed any offence as mentioned in the FIR. An earlier complaint filed by Balwinder Singh, General Secretary of the same association, under Section 156(3) Cr.P.C. seeking registration of FIR on identical allegations, had already been dismissed by the learned Judicial Magistrate First Class, Amritsar, vide a detailed order dated 08.04.2021. The petitioner has clean antecedents and is not involved in any other case. He is ready to join the investigation. His custodial interrogation is not required. No recovery is to be effected from him. No useful purpose would be served by detaining him in custody. Co-accused Gurmukh Singh and Baj Singh, against whom there are even graver allegations, have been granted concession of interim anticipatory bail by this Court. On parity, the petitioner too deserves to be given the same benefit. Hence, it is urged that the petition deserves to be allowed.

5. *Per contra*, learned State Counsel, assisted by learned Senior Counsel for the complainant, has argued that the present case involves serious allegations of forgery, fabrication, tampering with evidence, destruction of official records of SGPC and sacrilege/disrespect of Shri Guru Granth Sahib Ji by senior officials and sewadars since 2013-14. Reference is made to an incident dated 19.05.2016 at Gurudwara Ramsar, Amritsar, where approximately 80 sarroops were allegedly damaged in a fire. Learned State counsel submits that an inquiry conducted by SGPC culminated in a report

2026:PHHC:047726



dated 23.10.2018, which revealed large-scale forgery of records, bills, ledgers, and vouchers, along with destruction of records and fabrication of evidence by officials and senior management. However, no action was taken against the persons involved, indicating a nexus between the culprits and higher authorities. A High-Level Enquiry Commission was constituted by SGPC in July, 2020, which submitted its report on 23.08.2020. The Commission found that 328 saroops of Shri Guru Granth Sahib Ji were unaccounted for and were under the control of the petitioner and his co-accused, and recommended legal action. The petitioner was serving as Secretary in Dharam Parchar Committee, SGPC. Under his supervision, the scriptures were placed in a 'suspense account', which showed deliberate negligence on his part. In February, 2020, 61 scriptures were prepared in an unauthorized manner from additional parts. He had failed to perform his duties intentionally. The petitioner acted in collusion with co-accused in commission of the offences. His custodial interrogation is required for conducting proper investigation in the matter. It is, therefore, urged that the petition is liable to be dismissed.

6. This Court has heard the rival submissions.

7. The petitioner was admittedly posted as Secretary with the SGPC during the relevant period. As per the allegations, 328 saroops of Shri Guru Granth Sahib Ji were accounted for during this period and the same were under the control of the petitioner and the co-accused. The petitioner has been nominated as accused on the allegations that under his supervision, the scriptures were placed in a suspense account, which showed deliberate negligence on his part. He had been compulsorily retired from the post of Secretary. The allegations do not *prima facie* indicate that he was involved in

2026:PHHC:047726



any act of misappropriation or that he committed any form of disrespect to holy saroops of Shri Guru Granth Sahib Ji. Rather, the allegations are confined only to the negligence and not to any act of misappropriation or criminal intent. It also emerges that the alleged incidents pertain to the period from 2011 to 2016, whereas the FIR in question has been registered only on 07.12.2025, after an inordinate delay, for which no plausible explanation has been furnished. Another significant aspect is that the FIR has not been lodged by the SGPC itself, which is the competent body entrusted with the management of religious affairs but rather at the instance of a third party, despite the matter having remained within the knowledge of the SGPC for a considerable period of time. It is also apparent that the evidence sought to be collected by the Investigating Agency is largely documentary in nature and, therefore, custodial interrogation of the petitioner does not appear to be necessary. In any case, if any further inquiry is required from the petitioner, the same can be effectively carried out by directing him to join and cooperate with the investigation as and when called upon to do so.

8. It is further noteworthy that there is nothing on record to suggest that in the event of being granted anticipatory bail, the petitioner would either tamper with the evidence or influence any witness. The petitioner is stated to have clean antecedents and has expressed his willingness to join the investigation. In view of the aforesaid facts and circumstances, this Court is of the considered opinion that the petitioner has made out a case for grant of anticipatory bail. Consequently, the present petition is allowed. The petitioner is directed to join the investigation within a period of ten days from today by appearing before the Investigating Officer or as and when called upon to do so

2026:PHHC:047726



and in the event of arrest, he shall be released on anticipatory bail subject to furnishing adequate personal/surety bonds to the satisfaction of the Arresting/Investigating Officer and subject to the conditions as envisaged under Section 482(2) of the BNSS.

9. It is made clear that the observations made hereinabove are only for the purpose of deciding the present petition and the same shall not be construed as an expression of opinion on the merits of the case.

27.03.2026
Waseem Ansari

(MANISHA BATRA)
JUDGE

Whether speaking/reasoned
Whether reportable

Yes/No
Yes/No