

Candidate Statement

Please email this statement to SSSC_Election@armaninoLLP.com by midnight Pacific Time on Friday, August 26, 2022. Please include a recent photo of yourself to be displayed to voters.

Instructions

1. Please respond to each question individually in the boxes provided.
2. Please answer each individual question. A general narrative/essay/story/letter will not be accepted.
3. Armanino will review your statement. If your statement is found to contain incomplete and/or inappropriate content, you will be asked to remove, revise, or update the content. "Inappropriate content" includes, but is not limited to, derogatory and/or inflammatory statements.
4. Several of the questions are identical to those asked of Candidates in previous elections. If you also submitted a statement in a different election, it is permissible to reuse your previous answers to those particular questions.

Personal Information

Name:	Sahaj Singh Khalsa
City & State/Country:	Santa Fe, NM, USA
Email:	sahajs@gmail.com (please do not display publicly)
Name of Spouse:	Sat Shabad Kaur Khalsa (please do not display publicly, as she has already been attacked unjustly)
Occupation:	College Professor/Program Director/Paramedic
Length of Participation in 3HO/Sikh Dharma:	Lifetime (47 years)
Length of time as an Ordained Minister of Sikh Dharma:	23 years
Are you a KRI certified teacher or trainer? If so, what is your certification level and when did you acquire your certification?	No

Ashram Communities lived in:	Washington, DC, Herndon, VA, Mussoorie, Dehradun, Amritsar India, Espanola and Santa Fe, NM
3HO/Sikh Dharma Community Positions:	Current SSSC board member, KIIT board member, former staff at MPA, GM SDEI

Questionnaire

1. Why do you feel called to serve on the SSSC Board?

Serving on the SSSC board the past two years have been incredibly challenging. We have attempted to navigate very difficult circumstances and a polarized community. My goal has always been to find a way forward that serves all elements of the community, and to provide healing to those who need, and want, it from us. The decisions we made have not all been popular, and some have exposed me and my family to unwarranted and false attacks on us from people who disagree with the direction we have taken. The remaining work will continue to be challenging and hard.

I ultimately chose to stand as a candidate for this board because I strongly believe the following:

1. Our obligation is to the truth, even when it is complicated and messy. Perhaps particularly then. This is why we have greeted each other with “Sat Nam” for so many years.
2. My obligation, given by Guru Gobind Singh, is to stand up for others, and offer what protection and support I can. This obligation does not only apply to people who look, act or believe like me, it applies to all. If elected, I intend to continue to try to meet that obligation.
3. The work that remains, while hard, is worth doing and I believe we will emerge stronger as a community for it, presuming we are able to find a path forward that is focused on our shared values as Sikhs and yogis.
4. The example of Bhai Kanhaiya, who served all, no matter their background, is a lesson we must live in our community.
5. There is immense value in our community, in the people in it, and in the good those people are doing around the world. I believe we can grow and realize that value by living to the teachings of the Gurus and finding a way to serve all. If we do that, I believe the community can thrive and offer healing to all those who need it.

2. What relevant areas of experience and expertise qualify you for this position and will

make you an asset to the board?

1. I have been a board member for the past 5 years and the SSSC president for the past 2.5. This gives me good insight into the roles and responsibilities inherent in these roles.
2. I have extensive experience in leadership roles, including as a board member, of multiple state and national professional organizations. This again provides background and knowledge that can help inform the structures and roles in our community leadership.
3. As a college Program Director I am responsible for development and implementation of all aspects of a relatively large EMS education program. This has included addressing personnel issues, setting strategic direction, providing oversight and feedback to students and faculty and creating policies and procedures.
4. As a paramedic, I am also adept at seeing challenges, making quick decisions, and then being flexible in knowing when course changes are needed as new information is available.

All of this has helped me develop a strategic lens through which I view all issues, including those confronting our community.

3. Please summarize your prior and current service to the Dharma. If you have served in leadership positions please note them.

Lifelong member of the community, staff member/teacher at MPA in the very early days, GM of SDEI from 1999 - 2002 or so, SSSC board member 2018 (I think) to current.

4. Please describe your experience of the Siri Singh Sahib as a teacher and your experience of his teachings.

This is an interesting question to answer right now. It is a complicated question in the best of times, and more so now. As somebody born into this community, the Siri Singh Sahib has always been in my life. Unlike many of the First Generation, I didn't have a directly life-changing and defining experience with him, that was my parent's experience. My love for this community largely comes through the teachings of the Gurus, much of which was seen through the lens and translation of the Siri Singh Sahib. I remain grateful for those values and that connection, which has informed my entire life.

It is true that the Siri Singh Sahib and his teachings had positive, life-changing impacts

on many people, including me, to a certain extent.

It is also true that people in this community have been significantly harmed, either through his action, or inaction.

At the moment, the teaching of his that resonates the most with me is *'Don't love me, love the teachings. Don't trust me, trust God'*.

Given the events and revelations of the past few years, and of his life, in which he said he didn't want to create followers, but leaders and teachers, I believe our obligation is to live that teaching.

I am also grateful to the teachings for introducing my parents to Sikhi, as the core teachings of Sikh Dharma and of the Gurus align well with my own values. As discussed above, this includes the obligation to care for all, no matter their background, faith or stance on the recent events in our community.

My hope is that we can find a way to honor the aspirational elements of his teachings, and of those of the Gurus, while equally honoring the experiences of those who have been harmed.

We must offer healing to all, and ensure we evolve the systems and structures of our community to protect those who need it.

5. Please describe what the Siri Singh Sahib's saying means to you: "If you cannot see God in all, you cannot see God at all." In practical terms:

- a) How would you apply this saying in your day to day service on the board?
- b) How would apply this perspective to help our community and organizations move forward together?

I equate this saying to the obligation I see in our Guru to take care of all. Guru Gobind Singh stated that the actions of Bhai Kanhaiya, who served water to wounded 'enemies' during the siege of Anandpur Sahib, was the very living example of the teachings of Gurbani. He said this after Bhai Kanhaiya told him he was serving water to all because he saw them as humans first, and 'enemies' a distant second.

This saying from the Siri Singh Sahib aligns with those values, and is something I try to live my life by.

To answer the questions specifically:

- a) I would apply this teaching in my day-to-day service on the board by doing my best to see all perspectives, honor the people holding those perspectives equally, and working to find a balanced way forward. My intention is to find a way to do this without continuing to cause harm to anybody, no matter their perspective.
- b) I believe the way forward is to follow the example of Bhai Kanhaiya, serving all no matter if we agree or not. We must find this balanced way forward, without demanding adherence to any one perspective at the detriment of all others.

6. What do you understand the Role of the SSSC to be? How do you see the SSSC carrying out that role on a:

- a) Practical level
- b) Spiritual level

- a) On a practical level the role of the SSSC is to provide guidance, support and oversight to the community organizations so we can serve the community. We work to grow the assets of the community, increase prosperity, help set direction (with input from relevant stakeholders organizations and all community members) and aim to help us achieve our shared goals. We carry out this role through continuous conversations, learning, personal and organizational growth and supporting the amazing work that is happening around the world.
- b) On a spiritual level, our role is to provide guidance, support and direction to each other, the community, and the organizations. We do this through continued growth in our understanding of the teachings of the Gurus, through meditation, and through an understanding of the valuable essence of the teachings. We carry out this role by maintaining adherence to our shared values in every decision we make, and asking the same of others in the organization.

7. As an SSSC Trustee you are accountable to the Sangat.

- a) How would you build and enhance the relationship between the Sangat and the SSSC?
- b) The SSSC is part of a close knit community. Given that board members are likely to have strong connections to that community, explain how you will be able to adhere to the SSSC confidentiality policies that apply to board members?

- a) We need to listen to each other more. Not talk at each other, but talk to each other. I have found that we do this best when we are serving. We should get out from behind our Zoom screens and serve people. Whether it is feeding the hungry, caring for the sick, cleaning up after Gurdwara or a yoga class, when we are focused on service, we tend to find common ground that we wouldn't otherwise find.

The SSSC also needs to increase transparency between us and the Sangat we serve and are accountable to. While we have passed a transparency policy, which has caused some change, it is just a first step. We should be guided by the Sangat, and that is difficult, if not impossible, to achieve when the Sangat isn't aware of what we are doing. The quarterly Town Halls we have begun are another step in that direction, but it is a long journey that must continue.

- b) Confidentiality is a challenge for us, and has been for quite a long time. We need to get better at it. However, as discussed above, we need to be more transparent, so fewer things need to be confidential. We should switch our default from one of confidentiality to one of transparency. Of course, we still have obligations to maintain confidentiality when it is necessary. I have been able to adhere to confidentiality expectations during my time on the board because I understand the importance of it professionally. As a healthcare provider, I have always been obligated to maintain patient confidentiality, as required by US federal law. I have the same obligations relating to students in my college program, again as a required by US federal law. I am well aware of the reasons behind those confidentiality expectations and will continue to meet them.

8. The SSSC strives to practice diversity, equity, and inclusion.

- a) What experience do you have incorporating these practices into your personal and professional life?
- b) How would you incorporate them into our Organizations?
- c) How will you advance the organizational goals of diversity, equity and inclusion?

- a) I am a bearded and turbaned Sikh paramedic who works in public safety. My entire professional career (and many personal experiences) has been one that is addressing these issues. I have had to fight to maintain my presence in this career field, when many people don't think somebody who looks like me

belongs here.

I have co-authored research exposing gaps in equitable care in EMS (award-winning and published international), was the primary author on a position paper of the National Association of EMS Educators (I am a board member) relating to these topics, have presented on them at state and national conferences, have advised various state offices of EMS, and other schools in tackling these issues. I have chaired a national DEI taskforce, serve on another, and have facilitated multiple national summits on Cultural Humility and inclusion. In that role, I facilitated and was the lead author on a Consensus Statement, with specific calls to action, regarding DEI in EMS and public safety. The Statement has been approved by the NAEMSE board and is now being considered by multiple other national stakeholders. The goal is to cause real change this profession. One of my papers on this topic is cited in the most widely used EMT textbook in the country, so many new EMTs are reading about these issues.

- b) We should be a natural fit for DEI issues, given the teachings of the Gurus. However, we have work to do. I intend to bring my experience and knowledge to bear in all conversations in our Organizations so we can ensure we live to our values of welcoming all. The first step, understanding the scope of the challenge, is being accomplished now, so we will be able to move the work forward and quickly improve where we need to.
- c) Those goals must be front-of-mind with every decision we make. We are currently somewhat aware of the issues in our community, but we have more to learn. We need to do more to ensure we aren't keeping people out, and to do that we have to listen more. Listen to the voices of people who have been excluded, been made unwelcome, or otherwise marginalized in our communities and events.

9. How do you see the 3HO/Sikh Dharma family of Nonprofit and For-profit organizations serving humanity in these times?

- a) What do you see as the three (3) greatest challenges facing the Sikh Dharma/3HO Community and the family of For-profit and Nonprofit entities?
- b) What would you do as a Trustee to overcome these challenges?
- c) What skills, tools, and techniques will you bring to the SSSC Board of Trustees to help it move toward the vision you described above?

We can continue to serve humanity a number of ways, some of which are already occurring.

Feeding people.

Offering yoga and meditation to those in need.

Operating conscious, aware, and helpful businesses.

Educating strong, uplifting, aware, intelligent leaders.

Three challenges:

1. Finding ways to offer healing to those who were harmed.
2. Healing the schism growing in our community.
3. Identifying and strengthening our shared values and how we will live them.

To overcome these challenges I will continue to work on living our shared values, personally and organizationally. I will listen to those who need healing and find ways to offer it. I will listen to people, no matter what side of any issue they are on, to find common ground and a shared path forward. I will work to ensure our organizations continue to grow into the future, learning from the past.

I bring the skills of listening, of finding ways forward, of creating systems and policies to serve all, of successfully balancing competing interests, of long experience both in and outside of this community in challenging environments to make positive change. I have a strong sense of ethics and integrity which I bring to everything, including service on this board. I fully believe this community, and the organizations, will be able to grow into the future and serve humanity if we fully live our stated values and learn from our past in crafting who we will be going forward.

We have to look at the past to ensure we don't repeat it, but keep our eyes on the future to ensure we have one.

10. Board service regularly requires 20 to 40 hours per month (or more) in evening and weekend board and committee meetings. These meetings are generally held at 8:00 pm Eastern time (20:00 hours). In addition, there may be multiple Face-to-Face meetings per year.

- a. Can you fulfill these requirements?
- b. If so, how will you balance these requirements with your other personal and professional responsibilities?
- c. What do you anticipate being the most difficult part of serving as a Trustee on the SSSC Board?

I can, yes. I have been doing this difficult balancing act for 5 years, I can continue to do so. The most difficult part of serving on the board is balancing personal and professional.

11. Are you related by blood or marriage to an officer, director, employee, or paid contractor of any of the constituent organizations (nonprofit or for-profit) including all subsidiaries?

- a. If yes, to whom are you related, how are you related to them, and what is their position?

My wife works in administration with the office of Ethics and Professional Standards.