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News

Episcopal bishop's family accuses denomination of mishandling abuse allegations

Nivedhan and Eklan Singh shared allegations of physical abuse, alcoholism and emotional abuse against their father, Prince Singh, an Episcopal bishop in Michigan.



The Rt. Rev. Prince Grenville Singh, provisional bishop of the Episcopal dioceses of Eastern and Western Michigan. Video screen grab courtesy of the Episcopal Diocese of Eastern Michigan

August 11, 2023

By [Kathryn Post](#)



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Dalit woman on the lowest rung of India's traditional caste system, Roja Suganthi-Singh grew up viewing the church as a haven where


grace was extended to all, regardless of caste differences.

Today, the institution no longer represents safety for Suganthi-Singh. “I don’t know when I will be able to sit in a church and feel normal again,” she told Religion News Service. “That was robbed of me.”

In June, Suganthi-Singh’s two adult sons, Nivedhan and Eklani Singh, made [allegations](#) on [social media](#) that their father, the Rev. Prince Singh, the Episcopal Church’s provisional bishop of the dioceses of Eastern and Western Michigan, was guilty of physical abuse, alcoholism and emotional abuse.

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Suganthi-Singh and her sons are calling for Prince Singh, who they say is unfit
 **EN** rgy, to step down or be pushed out of his position. They also have
investigation into the response to their allegations by Presiding
Bishop Michael Curry, the primate of the denomination, and Bishop Todd

Bishop Michael Curry, the primate of the denomination, and Bishop Gene Ousley, who heads the denomination's Office of Pastoral Development. The Singhs say both bishops mishandled their allegations.

Prince Singh is voluntarily participating in a [Title IV investigation](#), an internal disciplinary process for Episcopal clergy accused of misconduct.


In a June 30 [video update](#) to his diocese, Prince Singh said, "While I cannot control the outcome, it is my firm belief that this thorough examination will determine that I have not broken my vows in ordination, or my adherence to the canons. I know I have not done the things my sons report."

In a statement to RNS, Curry acknowledged the suffering of the Singh family and committed to discerning a way forward "in love and justice."

"We were heartbroken to receive the email detailing abuse and other concerns in December, and our immediate focus—in addition to pursuing comprehensive evaluation options regarding Bishop Singh and considering the disciplinary process of Title IV—was on how we might help family members heal," Curry wrote. "We should have communicated more, and more effectively, with the family about all that we were considering, which may have alleviated some part of the suffering."

Spokespeople from the Episcopal Church and for Singh's diocese told RNS they could not comment directly on an ongoing Title IV investigation.

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As a priest in New Jersey and later bishop of Rochester, New York, from 2008-2022, Prince Singh was a charismatic, beloved leader known for dynamic preaching and for serving alongside his then-wife, Suganthi-Singh. “There was always a presentation that they were doing really well, happy and on the same page,” said one former parishioner.

When Prince Singh sent an email in February 2021 to thousands of clergy and laypeople announcing that he and Roja had “mutually decided to end our marriage,” it was a shock.



Roja Suganthi-Singh. Photo by Sarah O'Connor, courtesy of Suganthi-Singh

“After some intentional therapy and marriage counseling, Roja named the truth
 **EN** age is over,” the email said. “While it was difficult to absorb initially, upon further reflection, I agreed with her.”

For their sons, however, the letter immediately rang false: The desire for divorce was not mutual, they said. Suganthi-Singh had agreed to a temporary separation for her physical and emotional safety, Nivedhan [said](#), only after their father had demanded a divorce with increasing frequency in recent years.

“I remember him screaming at my mother that he is through with her and that the marriage is over on numerous occasions,” Eklan said in an open letter published on EpiscopalAccountability.com.

Suganthi-Singh recalled feeling numb when the bishop’s email went out. Though Prince Singh had sent her his drafts, Suganthi-Singh said she’d felt pressured to agree to send the announcement before the divorce was finalized.

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“This Diocese called me to serve as one spiritually married to you. As a diocesan leader, I feel responsible to let everyone in the diocese know that has changed,” Prince Singh wrote in a February 2021 email to Suganthi-Singh. “I would want to get this word out next week because of the spiritual separation that has already taken place.”



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one of the drafts, Suganthi-Singh asked her then-husband to remove a line saying the email was sent with her consent.

Afterward, Suganthi-Singh and her sons have said they felt as if they were erased from their church family. They said no words of comfort were forthcoming from diocesan friends, even when, months after the letter, their house — where only Prince Singh was living at the time — burned, with their belongings. At a January 2022 farewell service for Prince Singh, after his election to serve in Michigan, they maintain their names were barely mentioned.

On Dec. 1, 2022, Nivedhan and Eklan Singh and Suganthi-Singh were dismayed to learn of an email Prince Singh sent to his seminary friends announcing he'd made a "Bollywood-like" commitment with an old girlfriend from seminary days in India, six months after his divorce was finalized. Prince Singh described the reconnection as a "miracle" and evidence of "God's favor."



Nivedhan Singh performs at The Basement East in Nashville, Tenn.
Photo by Kit Wood, courtesy of Singh



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The news of his father's engagement upset Nivedhan Singh, in part because his father had used liturgical language to endorse his actions as God-ordained. The engagement also came as Nivedhan Singh was coming to grips with harsh realities from his childhood. He alleged that his father physically abused him between the ages of 3 and 13, often punitively and while drunk: that he broke a Super Nintendo game system, kicked Nivedhan, smashed a glass chess board and a cellphone in anger, and regularly hit him.

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“This was more than spanking,” he wrote in an [open letter](#). “I remember the intensity of my heaving sobs during the abuse. I found it hard to breathe, and remember gasping for air while being struck. After the abuse, I would be sent to my room where I would cry myself to sleep. Sometimes I would urinate on my own carpet in silent protest.”

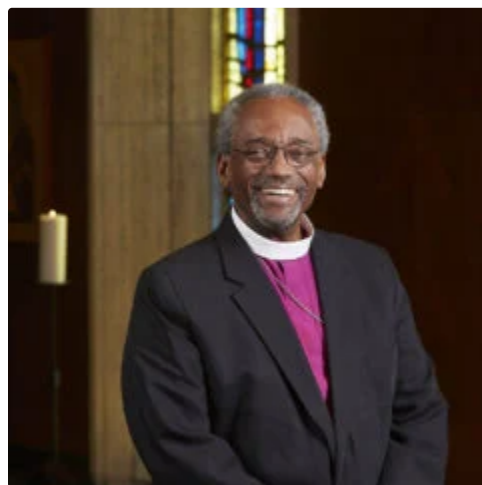
He described attempting suicide with a lamp cord at age 10 to “escape the beatings,” and suffering from bedwetting until age 13.

“I wasn’t just oversensitive,” Nivedhan Singh told RNS. “I realized, no, I’m just a survivor of domestic abuse. My dad, who I always thought was just a strict,  **EN** s actually a physical abuser and a narcissist who had been me, and us, my whole life.”

Nivedhan Singh felt he could trust Curry, a family friend, with these realizations. On Dec. 29, 2022, he and his brother sent letters documenting what they said they'd experienced, citing examples of alcoholism and physical violence.

In January, Curry thanked the brothers via email and said that while there was no “quick fix,” he'd consult with Ousley. Ousley has been criticized for failing to report [conflicts of interest](#) during Title IV investigations, rewarding clergy misconduct and [failing to enforce Title IV requirements](#) on bishops under his purview.

Six months later, the brothers say, neither Curry nor Ousley had followed up.




Presiding Episcopal Bishop
Michael Curry. Courtesy of
Episcopal Church

“If you’re a presiding bishop, and someone comes to you with claims of abuse ... isn’t it your responsibility to investigate their scope?” asked Eklan Singh.



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In late 2022, Suganthi-Singh emailed Curry that she had felt shunned by his lack of a personal response. In an ensuing video call in February 2023, she told Curry how she had left her house because she felt unsafe, alleging that Prince Singh had waved a kitchen knife at her in anger, then denied that he did so. In an email the next day, Curry said Ousley would follow up to facilitate family therapy and discuss next steps, but the family says it never heard from Ousley.

After Prince Singh learned that his sons had shared allegations with the presiding bishop, he texted them that if he were to lose his job, he would no longer be able to pay for their cellphone bills, health care, Eklan's tuition fees or "any future requests for financial help."

In March, Nivedhan Singh agreed to join his father for a counseling session with David Singh, who had claimed in an earlier email he'd been appointed by the presiding bishop to provide counseling to Prince Singh. According to Nivedhan, David Singh is a pastor, not a licensed therapist, and a close friend of his father's. David Singh is not related to Prince Singh or his family.

Nivedhan described the session as an "intervention" during which David Singh and his father insisted he was projecting resentment toward his father due to abandonment issues.

"Yes, my dad was absent for a lot of my life, but when he was there he would beat me up," said Nivedhan Singh.

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hypocrites

In June 2023, Eklan and Nivedhan posted the letters they'd written to Curry on Facebook. Two days later, Bishop Stephen Lane, provisional bishop of Rochester, New York, received an email with Nivedhan Singh's disclosure and said it constituted a formal complaint against a bishop, which he [directed to the Title IV intake officer](#).


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“Bishop Lane did in five minutes what Presiding Bishop Curry didn't do in six months,” Nivedhan Singh told RNS.

In an [email](#) sent to members of the dioceses of Eastern and Western Michigan on June 19, diocesan leaders described Nivedhan and Eklan Singh's allegations as “internal family dynamics,” wording Nivedhan found dismissive and offensive.

Attached was a letter from Prince Singh in which he noted that “divorce is messy” and said he was “deeply embarrassed” by his sons' allegations. He said his sons had either declined or discontinued family therapy (referring to the session with David Singh), and he added that he had “encouraged” the

 **EN** op's office to open a Title IV investigation, though Lane had [previously](#) submitted a complaint. Prince Singh also said that he was not [suspended](#) but would submit to a clinical evaluation and then take “a reflective

suspended but would submit to a clinical evaluation and then take a reflective retreat.”




Eklan Singh performs as Cyrano in
Cyrano de Bergerac at Purchase
Repertory Theatre. Courtesy of Singh

Matthew Townsend, who served as Prince Singh’s communications director in Rochester, questioned why statements from Prince Singh were issued at all.

“I was troubled by what he wrote, and I was equally troubled that the diocese would issue such a statement from him. When someone has been accused of some kind of misconduct, I find it unusual that they would be allowed on an official channel to say anything about the complainants.”



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In July, Eklan Singh, Nivedhan Singh and Suganthi-Singh launched www.episcopalaccountability.com, a website documenting their allegations. The site [makes clear](#) their belief that Prince Singh violated the Episcopal Church's [clergy standards of conduct](#) at several junctures and their claim that Ousley and Curry violated Title IV protocol by failing to promptly deliver information on an offense to the intake officer.

The family members have continued advocating for the deposition of Prince Singh and Title IV investigations into Curry and Ousley. They are also asking for a third-party investigation into the actions of Curry and Ousley, believing it unlikely that the church will follow its own Title IV procedures.

Prince Singh has continued to maintain that his sons' allegations are an emotional response to the divorce, but Suganthi-Singh, Nivedhan and Eklan Singh disagree, saying it's about an institution that elevates individuals, imbues them with spiritual authority and grants them a platform for controlling their public image, regardless of their moral and ethical qualifications and the impact on survivors.

RELATED: [When abuse victims are adults, they're often treated as 'sinners,' threats to churches](#)



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