

SFV Chairman's Report – Beant Singh Deu

First, let me take this opportunity to Wish our SFV Sangat, a Happy, Healthy, and Prosperous New Year.

It has been a very eventful closing quarter of the 2011 year. We celebrated Shaheedi Gurburb of Sahibzadas (New addition to Gurburb Celebrations), Guru Gobind Singh Ji's Parkash Utsav gurburb, also performed Annual Cultural program, and Annual Youth Seminar. Sangat's participation was very encouraging and appreciated. Participation in Punjabi School has been on the rise. We witnessed our youth learning and reciting Jap ji Sahib in Sunday Diwans. Gurdawara sign has been completed and lighted. Parking spaces have been restriped, and repair of septic system has been completed.



Next quarter is going to be even busier with the impending General Body meeting that is scheduled on Sunday, March 11, 2012. Election committee has been formed to prepare slate of three interested candidates for the elected trustees for Board's approval. Four vacancies, for the contributing Trustees, have also been announced. Applications for the contributing trustee's positions can be obtained from the SFV Treasurer and submitted back to the SFV Treasurer by January 31, 2012 for processing.

To fill seven vacancies on the Board we are looking forward to our youth and dedicated members of the general body, who have time, energy, and genuine *Shardha* for community service. Speaking from experience, it is a great education and opportunity to bring fresh and exciting ideas in the Board and in the Management Committee for the needed improvements and enhancements that fulfill the objectives of our beloved Organization. As a member of the Board and the Management Committee, you are able to do this Seva more effectively. Granted, it takes time and effort to do SEVA, but it pays back many-fold in spiritual fulfillment and mental satisfaction.

In the end, I encourage you to set aside sometime for the community service which is a very rewarding experience, self satisfying, and gives plenty of peace of mind. Let the New Year give us all *Utshah, Budhi and Himmat* to devote ourselves for SFV programs and for the benefit of our entire community.

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

SECRETARIES CORNER: Raminder Singh Bindra

The following highly significant Gurburabs were celebrated in our SFV Gurdwara Sahib in which Sangat participated in large numbers.

1. Shaheedi Gurburab of Char Sahibzaidaz,
 2. Guru Nanak Devji's Parkash Utsav
 3. Guru Gobind Singh jee's Parkash Utsav
- Capt, Amrik Singh jee, Jaswinder Singh jee, Sawinder Singh jee, SFV Youth, SFV Ladies Group and Ragee Gurnam Singh jee's Jatha enriched the Sangat with Shabad Kirtan and Gurbani Vichaar.

Mrs. K. Sethi gave a speech on the teachings of Guru Gobind Singh. SFV Sangat presented Kavitas and the Sangat listened to them with rapt attention!

The SFV Sangat appreciated the celebration of Guru Gobind Singh jee's Gurburab on December 31, 2011 from 7:00 pm to 12:00 pm and welcomed the New Year 2012 at 00:00 hrs on January 01, 2012 with slogans of 'Jo Bholey So Nihal, Sat Sri Akal'. The Dewan Hall vibrated with sounds of Jaikaras.



SIKH AFFAIRS COMMITTEE: Ajaib Singh

A SIKH YOUTH FORUM- "My Faith-My Challenges" was held at SFV Gurdwara on November 19, 2011. It was attended by over 50 members of our congregation and as desired this Forum started an honest and frank dialog between our youth and the SFV congregation. This Forum was quite a thought provoking and informative event and discussed a rather highly important issue faced by all Sikh Diaspora- the issue as to "**why our youth (teens thru the age of young adults) become somewhat disenchanted with activities in our Gurdwaras**". It provided insightful glimpses (not entirely unexpected) into the reasons behind this issue. The reasons appear to go far beyond their school exams, study pressures or their time consuming efforts in building new careers. It seems more due to the way Gurdwara activities happen. It appears



SIKH YOUTH FORUM- November 19, 2011
Speakers and Coordinators

that, although, our youth continue to love Sikh ideology and Gurus' teachings, the experience of coming to Gurdwara for some of our youth is less than an exciting exercise. It became clear in this Forum that the key issues that collectively rob our gurdwara activities of intellectual stimulus and challenges for our youth include:

1. Scarcity of opportunities for youth involvement in Gurdwara activities and decision making processes,
2. Absence of venues and opportunities for understanding Gurbani and Sikh maryada,
3. An inadequacy of explanations of Gurbani/Sikh history in English by Sikh Clergy,

If one listened closely, one would hear our youth saying that for learning about Sikhi, they find other options (such as internet-based information sources or web-based dialogs and discussion groups) that are, perceived by them, more credible, convenient and time-effective. Perhaps, we need to strengthen the realization that the importance of Sangat -one on one, face to face- interaction with community members, is an important part of being a Sikh.

The Forum, however, ended with promising and hopeful notes shared by our Youth and by the congregation attending the Forum. Both the Sangat and the youth made positive and constructive suggestions. Start of a Gurbani Vichar/Sikh study group is one implementable suggestion that was brought-up.

To the credit of SFV Board, a Gurbani Vichar group has already been initiated under the Sikh Activities Committee. Dr Barinder K. Deu and Ajaib Singh will coordinate this activity. The Gurbani Vichar group has already started to meet on **second and fourth Sunday of each month in main Darbar Hall at 2:00pm** . Efforts are also underway to encourage youth participation in Langar activities. We will try to start this activity in near future.

PUBLIC RELATIONS OFFICER: permvir Singh

On Saturday, December 03, 2012 SFV held the annual cultural program at Robinson High School, Fairfax. The practices

started in the October at the Burke Community Center; boys' and girls' groups were organized and trained by volunteers. We appreciate parents' support at the practices. At

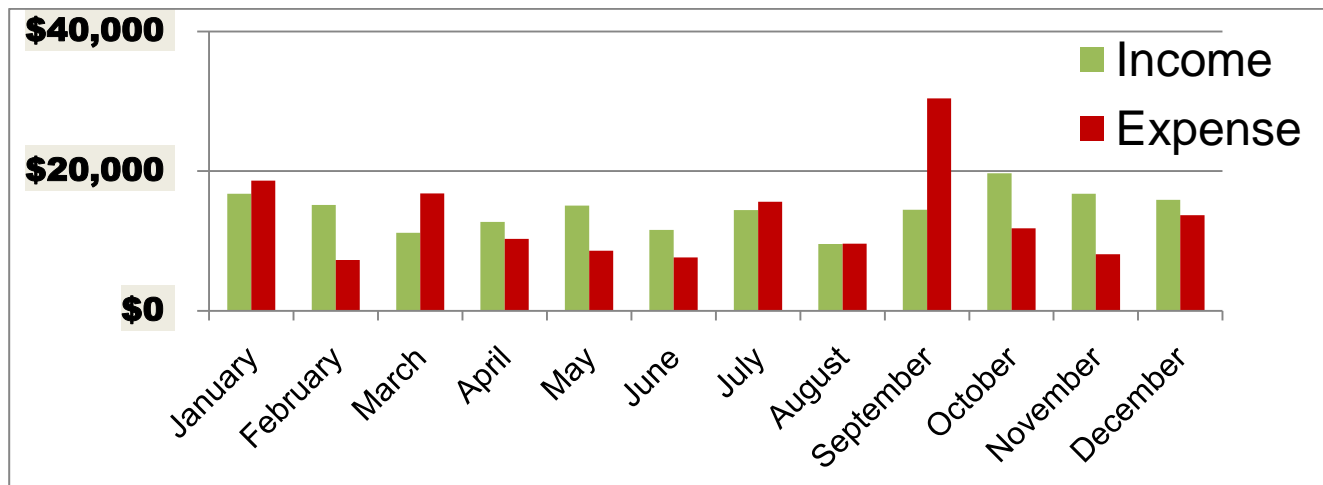
SFV Cultural Program, December 3, 2011



the program, over twenty-four entertaining items covering glimpse of Punjabi culture were presented; including boys bhangra, girls gidha, comedy and skits, the youth group presented an entertaining fusion items; as always the Punjabi folk songs, Giddha, Jaago were the favorite of the crowd. Over 250 persons attended the show to encourage the participants and enjoy the tasty food bazaar items. We thank the organizing community and the volunteers for commitment & support to make this a program a success.

TREASURER'S REPORT: Gurminder Singh Bhatti

The following is the year-end report of Income and Expenses for our Organization.



Year 2011 Report(\$)													
	Jan	Feb	Mar	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
Income	16,739	15,145	11,182	12,717	15,044	11,577	14,429	9,544	14,475	19,678	16,736	15,889	173,154
Expenses	18,638	7,276	16,812	10,276	8,602	7,656	15,610	9,624	30,410	11,814	8,095	13,695	158,508
Net	(1,899)	7,869	(5,630)	2,441	6,441	3,921	(1,180)	(80)	(15,936)	7,863	8,641	2,194	14,646

We thank both Dr. Paramjit Singh Ji Sachdeva and Dr. Amar Jit Singh Ji for contributing the following two articles. We are blessed for having such highly learned members in our congregation. I am sure our congregation will enjoy reading these scholarly and well-written articles. Ajaib Singh-Coordinator SAC.

Sri Guru Gobind Singh Ji—an Appreciation. *By Paramjit Singh Sachdeva, Ph.D.*

Sri Guru Gobind Singh ji's thirty-three years of guruship, from 1675 to 1708 CE, marked an important turning point in Sikh history. Ever since Sikhism's founding by Guru Nanak Dev ji in the fifteenth century, the religion's distinctive core beliefs and practices had remained largely unchanged. However, by the end of the seventeenth century, the times were different, and the Tenth Sikh Guru rose to the occasion. He set in motion far-reaching developments that helped secure Sikhism's religious and societal identity for the foreseeable future.

Sikhism is now the fifth largest religion in the world, with over 23 million followers. Many of its main features, and the Sikh identity by which we are recognized today, were given their final shape by Guru Gobind Singh. This last human Guru of the Sikhs also directed that after him Sikhism's only scripture, the *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, would serve as the Guru Eternal of the Sikhs.

Some of the highly significant steps taken by Guru Gobind Singh to launch a new phase in the glorious history of Sikhism include the establishment of the casteless *Khalsa* (Order of the Pure) and the *Panj Piare* (the Five Chosen Ones) whom he baptized on Baisakhi day, 30 March 1699. The Guru then asked these five *Khalsas* to baptize him as well, as a Singh, thus equating the Panj Piare with the Guru. At the same time, he promulgated the *Nash Doctrine* that stated that upon initiation, Khalsa Sikhs were to consider themselves completely free from previous religions, customs, practices, rituals, deeds, caste, stigma, and hereditary occupations--thus freeing them from the bonds of the past and giving them a fresh start in life as select followers of the One God, *Waheguru*.

The *Nash* doctrine had five elements: *Dharam Nash*--freedom from all earlier religious traditions or systems; *Karam Nash*--freedom from the shackles of earlier practices and deeds; *Janam Nash*--freedom from influence of caste or family lineage; *Sharam Nash*--freedom from stigma attached to any profession or the compulsion to follow a hereditary calling; and *Bharam Nash*--freedom from any earlier inhibition, prejudices or rituals prescribed by previous practices. He thus continued Guru Nanak's radical departure from earlier religious systems. This left no doubt at all that the Sikhs were distinct from Hindus and Muslims, and followed only their own faith, as revealed by the Sikh Gurus.

Guru Gobind Singh also required the Khalsa (i.e., initiated or baptized Sikhs) to wear the *punj kakke* (the 5 Ks) that would signify their special status in the community. The Five Ks have great symbolic value. They are: *kesh* (uncut hair; to show respect for God-given form; adult Sikh males are expected to wear a turban); *kangha* (wooden comb; for cleanliness of body and soul); *kirpan* (sword; readiness to fight aggressors and oppression); *kara* (steel wristband; reminder of the eternal One God; protecting the sword arm fighting for righteousness); and *kachhehra* (short breeches; emphasizing moral restraint).

Towards the end of his guruship, Guru Gobind Singh consolidated the Sikhs into a well-knit and self-governing religious community, establishing the supremacy of the *Khalsa Panth*. Guru Nanak had first organized the Sikh Panth at Kartarpur around the 1530s; and all successor Gurus had further strengthened this important Sikh institution during the ensuing two centuries. In 1708, Guru Gobind Singh transferred his full temporal authority to the Guru Panth. All decisions taken by the Panth, meeting as a *Sarbat Khalsa* (assembly of the whole), were to be considered to have the Guru's blessings, and were binding on all Sikhs.

In addition, most significantly, Guru Gobind Singh prepared the final Sikh scripture, adding the hymns of his father, Guru Tegh Bahadur, to the *Adi Granth* prepared in 1604 by the Fifth Guru, Guru Arjan Dev ji. Just before he passed away in Nanded in 1708, Guru Gobind Singh transferred his spiritual authority to this scripture, the *Guru Granth*

Sahib, as the sole religious authority for the Sikhs, and ordained that henceforth there would be no personal Guru of the Sikhs.

The significance of all these developments can be seen in the very definition of a Sikh now accepted by the Sikh Panth. As per the *Sikh Rehat Maryada* formally endorsed by the Panth in 1945, a Sikh is: "Any person who faithfully believes in the One Immortal Being (*Akal Purukh*; God); the Ten Gurus, from Guru Nanak to Guru Gobind Singh; the *Guru Granth Sahib*; the utterances and teachings of the ten Gurus; the baptism [*amrit*; initiation] bequeathed by the Tenth Guru; and who does not owe allegiance to any other religion."

All these steps by the Tenth Guru were significant for the future growth and sustainability of the Sikh faith and community. However, it is important to recognize too that in so doing, Guru Gobind Singh remained true to the teachings of the religion's founder, Guru Nanak Dev ji. All ten Sikh Gurus preached the same message, based on *Waheguru's Word (Shabad, Gurbani)*, as revealed to Guru Nanak and his successor Gurus. They all taught that man's highest calling is to serve as God's instrument, and to live in accordance with His Will (*Hukam*).

From its very beginning in the late-fifteenth century, more than 500 years ago, Sikhism had been a unique and distinct religion. Guru Nanak had introduced novel beliefs and a new way of life, separate from the beliefs and practices of Hinduism and Islam, the two other major religions practiced in Punjab at that time. Sikhs were asked to remember *Waheguru*, the One God, at all times; and not to worship any *avatars* (incarnations of God), deities (gods), and idols, as was done by Hindus.

However, the Gurus also preached that the One God does not discriminate among mankind on any basis, including religion. From Guru Nanak's time, Sikhism had emphasized the common fatherhood of God, and the brotherhood of man; and the Guru's teachings were meant for all humankind. From its very founding, Sikhism was a non-exclusionary and tolerant religion. Sikhs were asked to treat others as they themselves wished to be treated. Guru Gobind Singh's father, Guru Tegh Bahadur (the Ninth Guru) was martyred in Delhi in 1675 upon orders of the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb for defending the religious freedom of Sikhs as well as Hindus.

In the religious domain, Sikhs were expected to seek voluntary acceptance of their new faith, rather than forcible conversion, as the Muslim rulers of India had sought to do. In the social sphere, Sikhs were expected to protest against social evils and oppression in all its forms. They were expected to be productive members of society; and were not expected to renounce the world and become ascetics, as some Hindus and Jains were inclined to do.

Amongst themselves, the Sikh community was expected to practice congregational worship (*kirtan*), in which everyone could participate freely and equally (as a *sangat*); establish a common kitchen (*langar*) which served free food to everyone, without discriminating on any basis whatsoever; and share whatever they had with the poor, weak and vulnerable (through charity and sharing, *daswand*). Sikhs were thus asked to selflessly serve the common good, based on their Gurus' teachings.

The Sikh Gurus also explicitly rejected religious status or privilege associated with caste. Guru Nanak had denounced caste discrimination, subsequent Gurus had reinforced this message, and Sikh ritual observance

confirmed this teaching. In *gurdwaras* (Sikh places of worship) all devotees were expected to sit together, receive the same *karah prasad* (sacred pudding), and partake in the same *langar* (communal meal), irrespective of caste or other distinctions. At the Khalsa initiation ceremony, all initiates partake of the same *amrit*; and all Sikh males take the last name Singh, and females Kaur.

Following the Gurus' example, the dignity of work and the equality of all persons were emphasized, irrespective of caste, gender, or occupation. Accordingly, the Sikh religion does not differentiate between women and men on the basis of their gender. Women have the same religious obligations as men, and receive the same benefits and rewards. They are entitled to read the *Guru Granth Sahib* in public, be members of the *Panj Piare* of the Khalsa Order, and in general discharge any of the roles which might be construed in other religions as male. Guru Nanak's successor Gurus had thus institutionalized an egalitarian Sikh society, much before gender equality was sought in other communities around the world.

Equally importantly, the ten Sikh Gurus lived their lives according to these beliefs, and expected their followers to do the same. Guru Gobind Singh's life was a true indicator of his beliefs as a Sikh, and serve as an inspiring interpretation of the hymns of Guru Nanak and the *Guru Granth Sahib*. By practicing what they preached, the Gurus set an exemplary role-model for leaders everywhere.

The lessons of Guru Gobind's Singh's life and achievements are relevant not only for Sikhs, but for all of humanity. They emphasize moral living; non-discrimination on any basis, be it caste, gender, race, or religion; coming to the aid of those in need; fighting oppression, and defending individual and collective liberties; and seeking justice, equality, religious freedom, dignity, and human rights for all. *Sarbat da bhala* (the "good of all") as the Sikh *Ardas* (prayer of supplication) says. These are the same values that were adopted by the UN General Assembly 250 years later, in 1948, as the UN Declaration of Universal Human Rights. The Sikh Gurus were clearly way ahead of their time.

Once the Guru period was over—and with the Tenth Guru's spiritual authority handed over to the *Guru Granth Sahib* and temporal authority to the *Khalsa Panth*—the main task before the Sikhs, as true disciples (*Sishyas*, followers, Sikhs) of their Gurus, was to live according to the principles and beliefs their Gurus had taught them through word and deed. This remains the main task of all Sikhs even today.

Thus, thanks to the guidance provided by our Gurus, from Guru Nanak to Guru Gobind Singh, we now have the means to achieve the Sikhs' religious goal of being received into God's loving presence. All we need to do with reverence, humility, and *Waheguru's* Grace (*Mehr*), is follow the teachings of our Gurus and the *Guru Granth Sahib*, the scripture bequeathed to us by Guru Gobind Singh ji. For this, all Sikhs will eternally be grateful. *Waheguru ji ka Khalsa! Waheguru ji ki Fateh!*

Meaning of Satnam - By Amar Jit Singh, Ph.D.

The second word in our "Mool Mantar", as written by Guru Nanak Dev Ji, is Satnam. Usually, we interpret satnam as the God's name, which is truth. If we look at other words in the Mool Muntur, they are all attributes or qualities of Waheguru (God), such as, You are the creator of everything, You have no fear, You are outside the life and death process, etc. But, Satnam is an identification word. Therefore, Satnam has to have a different meaning, which should also be an attribute of Waheguru. How about if we say: Waheguru, your existence is the only truth and hence we call you Satnam?

We also know that there are other truths, such as, what goes up must come down, there is a day after night, birth is followed by death. So, how come our "Bani" says there is only one truth? Is there some contradiction? There is a need to explore the three truths we have just mentioned above: what goes up must come down, day and night, birth and death etc. Before we proceed to confirm that the existence of God is the only truth, let us define what a truth is. It is an event which takes place over and over again in the same manner forever.

The first truth mentioned above, what goes up must come down, was true until rockets came into play. Over fifty years ago, Russia sent a sputnik into orbit, which stayed in outer space. Thus, the statement that what goes up must come down is not true anymore. During US President Jimmy Carter's time (1972), a satellite was sent to the outer universe with greetings and a message from earth, hoping that some day we might get a response from somewhere in this universe. Since then, that satellite has traveled over three billion miles, has crossed the solar system boundaries, and is not falling back to earth. Therefore, according to our definition of a truth, what goes up must come down is not a truth.

The second truth we talked above, day follows a night, is dependent on the existence of our sun. Days and nights are created with the rotation of earth in the presence the sun. Suppose the sun disappears, then there won't be any more days and nights. It is estimated that in five billion years (500 crore years) the sun will run out of energy and will become dark, thus that will be the end of day and night routine. According to our definition of truth, this event will not have lasted for ever and hence is not a truth.

The death and birth process will also cease to happen when the sun goes dark. In those circumstances, it will be so cold that nobody on earth will survive. And hence, this process is not a truth. It is possible that in the next 5 billion years mankind may invent ways to travel to other galaxies and find a hospitable planet to live on. In that case, our earth's mankind can relocate to that planet and the birth and death process may continue.

Unfortunately, it is believed that one day in the future our universe will collapse and will not exist. Some scientist believe that it will take 10^{200} years (1 followed by 200 zeros) is for this to happen. Even though it is an unimaginable number, still this possibility exists. Therefore, all truths we have known are in reality not truths at all.

Let us now look at God. With the end of our universe, will God also vanish? No, it is not true, because from time to time some other universes are formed. There is a belief in the scientific community that there are parallel universes. Since God is the one who creates universe(s), He is not affected by the demise of a universe, which could be ours; He creates other universes and exists for ever. Thus, according to our definition of a truth, His existence is the only truth. This is reaffirmed by Guru Nanak Dev Ji's statement about God. He wrote, *Aad such, jugad such, hay bhee such, Nanak hosi bhee such*. This means God, you were true (that is, you existed) before the time started, you were true (existed) in the past, you are true (exist) in the present and you will be true (exist) in the future".

Thus, the only Truth is the existence of God. With this clarification, Satnam becomes an attribute of God instead of an identification word.

Sevadar: Sikh Affairs Committee of Sikh Foundation of Virginia:

For suggestions, comments, article contribution, and community news etc. please contact Ajaib Singh, SAC Coordinator, on 540 720 5755 (home) or 203 675 6023 (cell)

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