

SFV VOICE



Connecting the Sikh Foundation of Virginia (SFV) community

Spring 2020
(September 2019 – May 2020)



SIKH FOUNDATION OF VIRGINIA



Chairman's Foreword

Surjeet Singh Sidhu

Respected SFV General Body Members,

Waheguru Ji Ka Khalsa, Waheguru Ji Ki Fateh!

The whole world is going through these unprecedented times of COVID-19 induced pandemic, and it was very sad to close the Gurdwara Sahib building on March 14, 2020, in accordance with the local, state and federal government directives. The SFV Management has been periodically updating sangat, via emails and notices at the Gurdwara entrance doors, about the status of the Gurdwara operations. The Gurdwara building was closed to sangat from March 14 thru May 8, and as the health-related situation has been improving and the Fairfax county government has eased certain restrictions, management decided on May 8 to open the foyer and diwan hall from 7:00am to 8:00pm for sangat to pay obeisance. However, while visiting the Gurdwara, sangat is urged to observe the CDC-issued guidance about social distancing, wearing masks, washing hands, etc., for everyone's safety. I would like to point out here that, although the Gurdwara building was closed for some period and now is partially open, Bhai sahibs have continued to perform Parkash in the

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morning and Rehras Sahib path and Sukh Asan as per Sikh Maryada all this time. In addition, starting with the Vaisakhi program, we started virtual diwans on Thursdays (7:00pm to 8:00pm) and Sundays (10:00am to 11:45am). These virtual diwans will continue until the COVID-19 restrictions are removed and we return to regular diwans, and you can watch on YouTube (search for “Sikh Foundation Virginia”) and Facebook (go to your account and search for “sikh foundation virginia”). You can also go to the SFV website (sfova.org) and click on the “LIVE” button.

The SFV Board was all set for our general body meeting on March 15, 2020, including election to replace the three elected trustees that have a one-year term, and to have the next management in place for the 2020-21 session. All general body members were mailed the package for this annual meeting. However, due to the changed circumstances, the general body meeting had to be postponed and the current management was forced to stay in place by default. Given that restrictions on gatherings may continue for some time before circumstances get back to normal, the SFV Board of Trustees is looking into the feasibility of alternatives to have this general body meeting. We'll inform the general body members accordingly.

Appeal: In the meantime, while management has cut down on some expenses, such as cleaning services and garbage pick-up, other Gurdwara Sahib expenses continue and we are dipping into our rainy day funds. I know that once things get back to normal you all will donate generously, but think of sending your donations in the meantime as well. You can send your checks to the Gurdwara address at 7250 Ox Road, Fairfax Station, VA 22039, or put your donations in the golak when you come to Gurdwara Sahib for Matha Tek. As I mentioned above, the Gurdwara Sahib building is open from 7:00am to 8:00pm every day for the sangat to pay obeisance.

Let's all pray that this current COVID-19 situation improves soon, so that normalcy returns, including with regard to the Gurdwara operations.

Chardi Kala,

Surjeet S. Sidhu

Surjeet S. Sidhu

In this issue:

- Chairman's Foreword
- Special Vaisakhi Diwan
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- Sadh Sangat's Corner
- SFV Gallery

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The tragic events of late May and early June have left many of us deeply troubled. Injustice, prejudice, and the callous disregard for life have led to social unrest and even a sense of despair.

In difficult times like these, the Sikh ethos of “*treating the whole human race as one*” come to the fore. We, as Sikhs, should find a great measure of comfort in the values, compassion, and *sarbat da bhala* prayer that make us strong. The overarching among our values is a resolute and unshaken commitment to treat one another with dignity and respect. Among other tenets of Sikhism is to fight against injustice against anybody and anywhere. The Sikh Foundation of Virginia rejects racism in any shape or form, and there should be no place for it in our country or anywhere else.

The Sikh Foundation of Virginia stands in solidarity with our African American brothers and sisters in this just cause. While we support and value the very important role of police in providing safety and other social services, we condemn the use of unjustified, excessive and unnecessary force, and call for meaningful police reforms.

-Surjeet S. Sidhu

Below is Chairman’s Foreword included in the General Body meeting package (March 2020)

Chairman’s Foreword

It has been an honor to serve the Sikh Foundation of Virginia (“SFV”) as Chairman for another year through Baisakhi 2020. For this privilege, I thank the SFV Board of Trustees members for reposing faith in me by urging me to continue as Chairman. With the cooperation of everybody, we were able to finish some of the projects we initiated during the prior year, and undertook some new initiatives this year. As I mentioned last year, my effort in all endeavors always has been to keep welfare of the institution as the guiding light. No individual is of more importance than the institution itself, and that has been the core principle for all my actions. It has been gratifying to see that other members of the SFV Board share this philosophy and they have provided all needed help.

Although there is always room for improvement, the officers, coordinators and other Board members have put in tremendous efforts in accomplishing various tasks, whether related to construction, maintenance, youth activities, cultural program, Sikh affairs, coordination with other gurdwaras and Sikh institutions, or interfaith groups. Reports of various officers and coordinators are included in this package for your perusal. Majority of the projects related to the grant from the Department of Homeland Security have been completed, and the remaining few would be accomplished soon. In this regard, sangat always has responded generously to our appeals for funds, and we are confident that this would continue, especially with more members signing up for direct deposits.

My special thanks to our head granthi, Bhai Satpal Singh Ji, and his associates, Bhai Onkar Singh Ji

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and Bhai Karam Singh Ji, for their overall cooperation in running the SFV affairs in a smooth manner, and for being good ambassadors for the Gurdwara Sahib.

Thanks also go to Punjabi School teachers and helpers for their dedicated services, and to members of the Sangat who assisted the Board by serving in various capacities. Even more special thanks to those sangat members who serve in the background on their own, beyond the limelight, such as helping prepare langar in the kitchen, distributing langar, cleaning, and doing other selfless sewa.

With the help of a very dedicated and competent group of trustees, who through their diligence made my job much easier, we built upon the successes of the previous year and accomplished quite a bit this past year. We added several new aspects to our outreach program to spread the teachings of Sikhism to other faith communities for better understanding and cooperation.

As reported last year, we were successful in obtaining a \$150,000 grant from the Department of Homeland Security and have used it very judiciously to install and upgrade the security arrangements at the Gurdwara premises. In early February, the Sikh Foundation of Virginia again offered Sikh invocation in the Virginia senate chamber, and we were invited to do a similar invocation in the Virginia House of Delegates chamber. The latter could not materialize due to certain logistics constraints, but we have been assured an invitation next year as well.

To celebrate Hola Mohalla, a well-attended Basant kirtan Darbar was held at the Gurdwara Sahib on February 28, in which six renowned ragi jathas from India, Australia, Canada and the United States enthralled sangat with melodious shabad kirtan. Various events were arranged throughout 2019, including a Pakistan Gurdwara Yatra by certain members, to commemorate Guru Nanak Dev Ji's 550th Parkash Utsav.

The SFV Board is currently working on upgrading the audio-visual systems in the Gurdwara as the current systems are quite old and are not providing the proper and optimum output. During the general body meeting on March 15, 2020, I'll take a few minutes to expand on these and other accomplishments for members.

May we all always be in the grace of Waheguru!

Chardi Kala,

Surjeet S. Sidhu

Surjeet S. Sidhu

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Special Vaisakhi Virtual Diwan (April 2020)

SFV management wants to thank Sangat's outpouring support as a large number of SFV and Northern Virginia community watched the Virtual Baisakhi program hosted by SFV Gurdwara Sahib on April 14. We also thank the Embassy of India for its cooperation in coordinating this virtual diwan with SFV. In particular we appreciate Honorable Ambassador Taranjit Singh Sandhu for his message and expressed personal affinity for SFV Gurdwara Sahib.

The poster is set against a yellow background with decorative floral patterns. At the top center is the State Emblem of India with the motto "Satyameva Jayate". Below it, the text reads "Embassy of India, Washington, DC & Sikh Foundation of Virginia, Gurudwara Sahib, Fairfax Station, VA". The central text invites to "Virtual Baisakhi Celebrations" which will be "Live streaming on https://www.facebook.com/indiainusa" on "Tuesday, 14 April 2020 at 11:30 am, EDT". A "Programme" section lists: 11:30am Opening remarks by Shri Surjeet S. Sidhu, Chairman, Sikh Foundation of Virginia; 11:35am Shabad Kirtan; 12:05pm Message by Ambassador Taranjit Singh Sandhu, Ambassador of India to the United States of America; 12:10pm Anand Sahib; 12:15pm Ardas and Hukamnama; 12:25pm Samapati (closing remarks). "Time Zones" are listed: India: 09:00pm to 9:55pm IST; Atlanta & New York: 11:30am to 12:25pm EDT; Houston & Chicago: 10:30am to 11:25am CDT; San Francisco: 08:30am to 09:25am PDT. At the bottom, it says "Watch live also on www.sfova.org". Illustrations of Sikh dancers in traditional attire are placed on the sides and bottom right.

Embassy of India, Washington, DC
&
Sikh Foundation of Virginia, Gurudwara Sahib, Fairfax Station, VA

Invite you to join
Virtual Baisakhi Celebrations

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Key Achievements

Gurmat School. Thanks to all the Level 1 and 2 counselors, kids in Level 1 and level 2 have been learning about various topics such as life and teachings of Guru Nanak Dev ji, significance of his 550th Gurupurab, the teachings and physical aspects of Guru Granth Sahib Ji, names of the 10 Gurus and much more. An important innovation in 2019 was that every Sunday evening an email with Gurmat School updates for that day is sent to parents. Parents saw a detailed reference to everything that was covered that day, the suggested homework and related activities, and what is coming soon. Level 3 (13 and above) started attending class in the trailer last year, and their curriculum is now more discussion- and debate-oriented. We focused on the 'true' mission of Guru Nanak, and on clarifying His message of Oneness and Hukam. Recently we have discussed the Ardass in detail. The 'enclosed' classroom environment and the openness to discuss anything has led to very healthy discussions on Gurbani and Sikhi in general. Level 4 (16 and above) has been meeting regularly (minimum once a quarter) to keep them plugged in with Gurmat education. Thanks to Puneet Kaur and Manpreet Singh who are leading this effort and keeping our future leaders engaged.

Gurmat Camps. With Waheguru's Grace, we held a week-long Gurmat camp in Summer 2019 and a day-camp in Winter. These camps were attended by a large number of participants of all ages, from 6-20. Thanks to the young minds pouring in new ideas, our camps are now using Gurmat educational games and group activities. Kids learn from each other, and we teachers just facilitate the workshops. Gurmat School kids have taken part in an Ardass competition at SFV.



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SFV Quarterly Youth Gurmat Retreat – October 12, 2019

Youth Gurmat Retreat was a successful event. SFV youth discussion elaborated on the following topics:

- **Being a Sikh vs. being a part of Sikhism (Call it Mixism)**
- **Financial Health, EVERY DOLLAR HAS A NAME**
- **Submitting to a cause**

Goal was for our youth to understand the primary Sikhi elements of being accountable, being an asset, and being purpose driven. Discussions were held where youth participated and learned the meaning of being accountable for our words and actions, being an asset and not a liability – so do the seva in any which way you can, and be a purpose driven person.

SFV Gurmat School and extension via Virtual World

ਵਾਹਿਗੁਰੂ ਜੀ ਕਾ ਖਾਲਸਾ ॥ ਵਾਹਿਗੁਰੂ ਜੀ ਕੀ ਫਤਿਹ ॥

During this COVID-19 lockdown if one thing has kept us moving that is the ability to connect with everyone online. Sikh Foundation of Virginia's Gurmat School is not different. As of Sunday, April 19th, we have started moving towards making it a reality. The first virtual session was attended by 12-13 counselors. The idea was to discuss some of the questions we had received from our youngsters during the Summer and other Day camps. The next goal is to involve the youth (age 14-18) in these calls (it was more of a test run), then extend it to a bit younger members (10-14), and eventually extend the virtual learning to the youngest one (6-10 years old). There is a good possibility that the Summer Camp will need to be canceled this year. Keeping that in mind, we are preparing for some virtual workshops.

With Guru Nanak's grace, our counselors are fully prepared to use technology and keep progressing with our curriculum. Our youngsters are fully connected and all set to attend virtual sessions.

We encourage our youngsters to serve the community in any role or capacity you can. One of the ways to do so is to serve on the SFV Board as a Trustee (long-term) or Elected Trustee (short-term) where not only you get to lead different types of Seva projects but also get a chance to be a part of the decision making process. Please reach out to any of the Management Committee Members or the Coordinators to find the best fit for your role.

We thank Paramjit Singh Ji Sachdeva, Surinder Singh Ji, and many other dedicated volunteers for their passionate commitment to educate our youth and many other services.

SFV Security

With Waheguru's blessings, SFV was successful in getting the highest amount allowed by DHS for security enhancement of religious non-profit organizations. We were the first Gurdwara in Maryland, DC, and Virginia area that applied for and was granted the full permissible amount (\$150,000) to

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harden our premises and to enhance the security of our beloved organization. With constant encouragement of the SFV Board and its chairman, your security team has already accomplished most of the needed structural hardening of SFV premises. This entire team, especially Harjit Singh Chawla and Amarjit Singh Riat, spent innumerable hours dealing with governmental requirements, making project management plans and procedures, getting bids, selecting contractors, supervising and assuring that contractors are delivering the right equipment and it is properly installed. These efforts are still ongoing, but to date this team has accomplished the following:

- The door and window to Granthi's quarters were replaced and hardened for security.
- All exterior doors were modified with electronic access control, lockdown and monitoring capability
- Langar hall entrance doors were replaced with security doors equipped with remote electronic lockdown capability.
- New and high quality interior and exterior cameras with monitoring equipment and recording capabilities were installed.
- Parking Lot illumination with 18 new poles and LED lights were installed and are working.
- Gates have been installed for further security

SFV Held Two Red Cross Blood Drives in 2019

Sikh Foundation of Virginia in collaboration with Red Cross hosted Blood Drive on May 12 and December 15, 2019. It was great to see the goodness and generosity from our community. We were deeply touched by the overwhelming response for the blood drive. The participation was over and above our expectations. Red Cross brought their Blood Mobile both times so each donor could be provided privacy while doing the pre-donation interview. Over 50 people each time were able to donate blood.

SFV Seniors Program

The program has made tremendous progress and will restart once we fully open the Gurdwara Sahib. For more information about the Seniors Program, please contact Dr. Barinder Kaur Deu (email: barinderdeu@gmail.com, phone 703-978-2420) or Mr. Randhir Singh Chhatwal (email: randhir.chhatwal@gmail.com, phone: 978-884-8333).



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Covid-19 & Health

SFV management is requesting our Sadh Sangat to stay safe and follow prescribed practices to distance the Covid-19. Sadh Sangat Ji, if you have any medical question, please contact your physician. If you need additional information or guidance regarding COVID-19 good practices, please call SFV Board member Manjit Singh Taneja.



Important Transportation for seniors and Persons with Disabilities telephone numbers for the Fairfax County residents:

- CUE BUS: 703-385-7859 (TTY 711)
- City Wheels: 703-385-7859 TTY 711)
- Fastran: 703-222-9764 (TTY: 703-324-7079)
- MetroAccess: 301-562-5360 (TTY: 301-588-7535)
- Seniors On-the-Go: 703-877-5800 (TTY: 711), Monday-Friday, 8:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.
- Taxi Access: 703-877-5800 (TTY 711)
-

One Hundred 7th Graders from Fairfax County Visit our Gurdwara.

On January 29th, approximately one hundred 7th grade students and 10 staff members from St. Stephen's & St. Agnes School in Fairfax, visited our Gurdwara Sahib to learn and experience the Sikh religion and Sikh values. Their religion teachers had especially requested students receive the same experience as our Sadh Sangat does when we are in the Gurdwara, especially the Kirtan Darbar.

SFV Chairman Surjeet Singh Sidhu Ji welcomed the guests and appreciated the teachers for bringing the students to the Gurdwara Sahib. Dr. Barinder Deu Ji shared a powerpoint presentation covering Sikh Religion, Sikh Gurus, Sikh Tenets, Sikh Values, importance of Guru Granth Sahib Ji, Sikh Practices, Langar, and importance of Seva in Sikhi. Bhai Sahib Ji recited Shabad Kirtan. The students and teachers were fully immersed in the Kirtan. After Kirtan, Bhai Sahib Ji did Ardas and took Hukamnama. Students experienced a true sense of Sikh Rehat Maryada and how Sangat becomes one with the Bani. After the Vaak, Randhir Singh Chhatwal Ji shared with them, the meaning of the Shabad that Bhai Sahib recited, importance of Kirtan, meaning of Guru in Sikhi, and the high esteem Guru holds in Sikhi. Arjun Singh Sethi, an attorney and author of a book "American Hate" also attended the program. He shared what his experience has been being a Sikh born and raised in the USA.

Students and teachers asked several questions regarding the Sikh religion as well as the American Hate book. All questions were eloquently answered by Dr. Barinder Deu Ji, Randhir Singh Ji Chhatwal, Manjit S. Taneja, and Arjun Sethi.

Students enjoyed the Langar. All students as well as their teachers had a big smile and a feeling of contentment, and nobody was in a rush to leave. The school has also left a donation to SFV as a token of their appreciation. The program was arranged and coordinated by the SFV Board members. SFV Management thanks Jasbir Singh Sandhu Ji, Paramjit Singh Sachdeva Ji, Mrs. Polly Chhatwal Ji, and all other Sevadars in making this event a success. Sadh Sangat Ji, if you would like us to contact the school where your children go, please let us know. Our Board member Manjit Singh Taneja Ji will contact the school administration to invite them to the Gurdwara Sahib.

Rumi Forum visits SFV Gurdwara (Contributed by: Surinder Singh Ji)

On Wednesday, February 19th, a group of 17 people from the Rumi Forum, an interfaith dialogue group, visited the Sikh Foundation of Virginia to learn more about Sikhism and the Sikh practices. Sikh Foundation of Virginia's management has been putting extra efforts for the past couple of years to encourage more interfaith dialogues. It is clearly understood that the best way forward to live in harmony with others, dialogue and understanding of different faiths is the only solution. In addition, year round, SFV welcomes members of various local churches and students from Northern Virginia Community College, George Mason University, Robinson High School, and Braddock High School who visit us to learn more about Sikh religion and experience our melodious Kirtan and Langar services.

Sadh Sangat's Corner

Special Contributions by Paramjit Singh Sachdeva

The Life and Legacy of Guru Nanak Sahib Ji

The essentials of Guru Nanak Sahib's life are well known. He was born on 15 April 1469 into a Hindu family in a largely Muslim area of Punjab, India. He died 70 years later, on 22 September 1539, in Kartarpur, Punjab, now in Pakistan.

His first 30 years were spent at home, with parents, wife and two sons. He studied under local teachers, Hindu and Muslim priests, got married, raised a family, and worked as a storekeeper. Outwardly, this was just like many others' lives of that time.

But his inner spiritual life was anything but ordinary. His was an extraordinary intellect, constantly grappling with the big moral and philosophical questions that have always confronted humankind. He was spiritually inclined, and sensitive to the core.

He asked all kinds of questions, about life and death, about the essence of God, the meaning and purpose of human existence, the relationship between God and man, and what man's relationship with man should be. Of course, he included women in this too.

He questioned everything, honestly and fearlessly. He reflected on everything he saw, heard, and studied. He was not satisfied with the answers he got from his elders. He resolved to find his own answers, in his own way. He was searching always for the Truth.

For the next 25 years he travelled all over India and neighboring countries, including Ceylon, Afghanistan, Iraq, and Arabia. He visited many holy places, engaging in debate and discussion with priest and laity. He connected with God and his fellow man.

In the process, he received divine revelations and crystalized his own thoughts. He wrote these down, and passed them on to the next Guru. He conveyed these teachings in hymns set to melodious music. Throughout this period, he was accompanied by Mardana, the Muslim rebeck-player, his closest companion. More and more devoted followers gathered around him.

For the last 18 years of his life, he practiced what he had preached. His hymns introduced new prophetic teachings. The way he lived, as a householder, missionary, farmer, and preacher, gave new life to age-old moral principles. He introduced new egalitarian practices in the community he established. He appointed his most suitable follower as the next Sikh Guru. And he showed his Sikh followers a new Way of Life, distinct in many ways from the Hindu or Muslim way of life they had been following till then.



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This was Guru Nanak's life, very briefly. And what an extraordinary life it was. It gave birth to a new religion, Sikhism, over 500 years ago. A religion that is now the fifth largest in the world, with perhaps over 30 million followers all over the world.

This is, undoubtedly, Guru Nanak's greatest legacy. He established a new religion. Like other prophets before him had done.

He also gave us new teachings about how to conceive of the Creator God, how to reach Him, and how to relate to our fellow humans. He emphasized the oneness of God, and the oneness of humankind. A God of love, of mercy and compassion, of justice and forgiveness. And a moral code based on equality, mutual respect, acceptance of differences, and selfless service.

This is not the time or place to cover Guru Nanak's teachings in depth. The sole Sikh scripture, the Sri Guru Granth Sahib, includes all his hymns, as his divine revelations and inspired teachings. He personally handed them over to his successor, about 500 years ago.

All his nine spiritual successors, as Sikh Gurus, emphasized and lived by the same teachings. Six Gurus contributed hymns to the Sikh scripture, which was finalized by Guru Gobind Singh in 1678. All the Sikh Gurus considered the revealed Word of God as their Guru, as Guru Nanak had first done.

This is Guru Nanak's second big legacy. He, and his successor Gurus, gave the Sikhs their sacred Scripture, their Eternal Guru.

Other lessons too can be drawn from Guru Nanak's life, and the way he lived it. For example:

- ❖ He spoke up against oppression in all its forms. He told Truth to Power, both in the secular and the spiritual domains.
- ❖ He was a man of peace, but not of submission. His was the moral force. The pen is mightier than the sword.
- ❖ He brought us a timeless prophetic message that is universally applicable and widely accepted: In God We Trust.
- ❖ He championed universal human rights. For everyone. No exceptions. No ifs and buts. None whatsoever.
- ❖ He taught equality and justice for all. No distinctions based on caste, creed, race, gender, nationality, or even religion.
- ❖ He asked that we fight not only for our own religion, but for others' religious rights too. The ninth Guru gave his life for this.
- ❖ He asked that we respect all religions as valid in the eyes of our common Creator. And equally valid in the eyes of man.

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- ❖ He considered these to be eternal Truths, not mere platitudes. Divine revelations. God's Word. Not to be taken lightly.
- ❖ He taught these Truths to be supreme. But higher still is Truthful living, he said. Words matter, but deeds matter more.
- ❖ Remember God at all times, earn an honest living, and serve others, he taught. God before man. Service before self.

He said everyone could directly commune with and reach God. No intermediaries, not even any human Gurus, were required.

His was a life of humility, of compassion, of caring and sharing, of walking the talk, and showing us a new pathway to God. Caring not only for ourselves, but for mother Nature as well, as God's creation. Humanism, and environmentalism. Both.

His was a universal message of love, goodness, truthfulness, tolerance, justice, compassion, equality, fairness, and service. A message that resonates with everyone, everywhere. Not only among the Sikhs, but among other communities too. This too is a lasting legacy of Guru Nanak's life and how he lived it. Of what he taught, and what he did. 500 years ago.

We best honor Guru Nanak Sahib by recalling his life and legacy, as we are doing here – **and then by following his teachings** as best we can. It is wonderful that we can do this in America, the land of the free and the home of the brave. Guru Nanak's Sikhs, men and women, from here and abroad, feel at home here. God bless us all.

As we say in our daily prayers, *Sarbat da Bhala!* **This too is Guru Nanak Sahib Ji's core teaching – and lasting legacy.**

Celebrating Vaisakhi – Paramjit Singh Sachdeva

When we celebrate Vaisakhi every year, we must also keep in mind *What* we are celebrating. I believe that on this day, Sikhs in America celebrate at least *four* aspects of our unique religion: (1) the actions taken by Guru Gobind Singh Ji on the Vaisakhi day of 1699; (2) the close connection between Guru Gobind Singh Ji's actions and our previous Gurus' teachings, as per the Guru Granth Sahib Ji; (3) the universality of Sikh teachings; and (4) the similarity of Sikh beliefs and American values.

(1) Guru Gobind Singh Ji's Actions:

When Guru Gobind Singh Ji established the "Khalsa" on Vaisakhi day in March 1699:

- ❖ He asked the Khalsa to live their lives as "Sant-Sipahis" (or Saint-Soldiers) -- i.e., as fully committed, disciplined disciples of the Guru, ready to give their all for their faith. This included defending the religious and human rights of Sikhs as well as others, and fighting against social and economic discrimination and political oppression in all its forms, wherever it exists.

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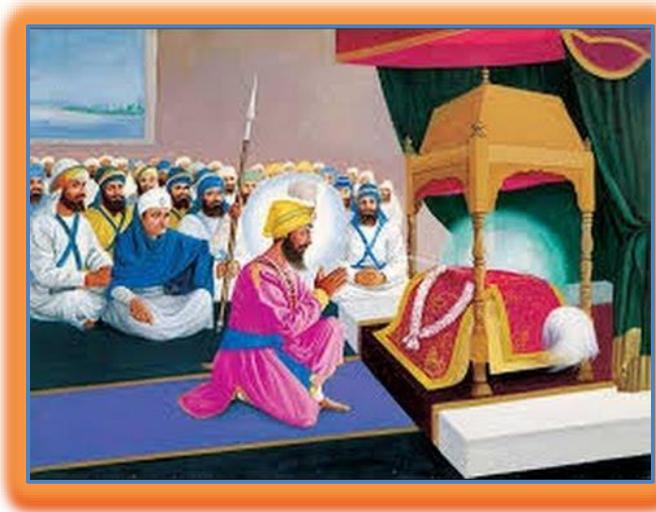


- ❖ The Guru considered the Khalsa as “Akal Purakh ki Fauj”, owing ultimate allegiance not to a human Guru but to the One God, i.e., to Akal Purakh or Waheguru. Hence the Sikh greeting or Jaikara: “Waheguru Ji Ka Khalsa, Waheguru Ji Ki Fateh”.
- ❖ Since that Vaisakhi day in 1699, all initiated Sikhs are expected to wear the 5 “Kakkars” -- kes, kangha, kara, kachehra, and kirpan -- so that they could be easily identified at all times.

Hence, on Vaisakhi Day we celebrate the joyous occasion of **establishment of the Khalsa**. This event proved to be a turning point in Sikh history. We are understandably proud of this remarkable history.



(2) The Teachings of the Guru Granth Sahib Ji:



These events of 1699 *also* remind us of the teachings of the Guru Granth Sahib Ji and the practices institutionalized by the Sikh Gurus. Four examples are given below:

First, Guru Gobind Singh Ji’s instruction to the Khalsa to live as a “Sant-Sipahi” ensured that the spiritual and secular aspects of a Sikh’s daily existence would be well integrated. He asked the Sikhs to sacrifice their life and livelihood for their faith, as had been instructed before by previous Gurus. The sixth Guru, Hargobind Sahib Ji and his Sikhs had fought many battles for just causes and protecting the Sikh faith, and the ninth Guru, Tegh Bahadur Sahib Ji had been martyred in defense of religious freedom for all.

Second, though the “Khalsa” Order was new, the **distinct religious identity of the Sikhs had already been well established** 200 years before the Vaisakhi of 1699. The distinctiveness of the Sikhs -- and of their religion -- originates not from the time of Guru Gobind Singh Ji, but from the time of Guru Nanak Sahib Ji. Sikhism’s distinctiveness is due not only to the Sikhs’ external appearance, but to the unique set of religious beliefs and teachings of Guru Nanak and his successor Gurus. It is the content of “Gurbani” – and the religious practices that emanate from it -- that distinguishes Sikhism from other religions, not just our personal attire.

Third, it was only this Gurbani -- i.e., the Bani of the first five Gurus and the Ninth Guru, and that of some selected Bhagats -- that Guru Gobind Singh Ji gave the “Gurgaddi” to, just before his demise in 1708. In instructing all Sikhs to consider this Granth as their Guru Eternal, Guru Gobind Singh Ji gave primacy to the Granth as Guru. He asked that Sikhs follow only the “Shabad” as Guru, just as

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Guru Nanak Sahib and his successor Gurus had instructed. The founder of Sikhism, **Guru Nanak Sahib Ji, too considered the Revealed Word from Akal Purakh (“Dhur ki Bani”) as his *only* Guru.**

And fourth, from the very beginning of Sikhism, Sikh practices were different from those of the surrounding Hindu and Muslim communities. When Guru Gobind Singh Ji created the Khalsa he asked that Sikhs follow the “outer” discipline of the “Bana” as well as “Bani”, the “inner” rehat maryada based on the Gurbani in the Guru Granth Sahib. Though Sikh practices have evolved over time, Sikhs have *always* been expected to follow *both* Gurbani and the religious practices introduced by the Gurus.

Hence, the Vaisakhi of 1699, or any other Vaisakhi day, should *not* be seen in isolation. The events of that day in 1699 not only created the Khalsa, but they *also reinforced* the teachings of the previous Gurus that provided its religious/doctrinal foundation. Guru Gobind Singh Ji was the Tenth Sikh Guru, not the First. The Vaisakhi events of 1699 built upon -- and were in accordance with -- the teachings of the Gurus that preceded him, and to the teachings of Guru Granth Sahib Ji to which he himself, in 1708, accorded the status of Guru Eternal.

Thus, our celebration of the Vaisakhi day of 1699 should ***simultaneously be a celebration of the Gurbani enshrined in the Guru Granth Sahib Ji.*** By remembering the religious/spiritual teachings underpinning the creation of the Khalsa in 1699, we celebrate the teachings of the “*Shabad Guru*”, rather than the teachings of any particular human Guru. We celebrate what it really means to be a Sikh. Not just on Vaisakhi day, but every day -- for the teachings of the Guru Granth Sahib Ji are timeless.

(3) The Universality of Sikh Teachings:

Guru Granth Sahib Ji’s message is relevant for everyone, everywhere. While the events of Vaisakhi day in 1699 have special significance for us Sikhs, the teachings of the Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji are universal. They are meant for all of humanity, irrespective of time or place. Our Gurus were way ahead of their time, for example in terms of their emphasis on gender and racial equality. Emphasizing the “Oneness of God” and the “Oneness of humanity”, Sikhism makes no distinction on any basis -- be it caste, creed, nationality, religion, or social or political status. We also expect our leaders to be transparent, democratic, and accountable to the people they seek to lead. Our Gurus, and their followers – i.e., all Sikhs -- are expected to wholeheartedly serve the common man and the common good, not just the elite of society, however defined.

(4) The Similarity of Sikh Beliefs and American Values:

These Sikh beliefs are important and relevant everywhere in the world, including America. **They are similar to the values that Americans cherish and seek to live by.** For Sikhs, there is no doubt that “In God We Trust.” Our Gurus’ emphasis on Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity predated the West’s call for these social values by about 300 years. Our Gurus’ teachings were fully consistent with, and came several centuries before, the words of the American Declaration of Independence which say that all men are created equal, and are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, including life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. And we certainly believe in, though we do not always practice, the truism that Women’s Rights are Human Rights.

Considering all this, **as we come together to joyously celebrate Vaisakhi every year, we celebrate *all* aspects of what truly makes us Sikhs!**

Poem contributed by SFV Sangat

ਕੇਸਾਂ ਦੇ ਕਾਤਲੋ,
ਜ਼ੋਰਾ ਸਿੰਘ ਵਲ ਵੇਖੋ ਜੁਝਾਰ ਸਿੰਘ ਵਲ ਵੇਖੋ
ਹਿੰਦ ਦੀ ਚਾਦਰ ਗੁਰੂ ਜੀ ਵਲ ਧਿਆਨ ਧਰੋ
ਮਤੀ ਦਾਸ, ਸਤੀ ਦਾਸ ਨਾਲ ਗਲ ਕਰੋ ਦਿਆਲਾ ਜੀ ਨਾਲ ਅਖ ਮਿਲਾਉ
ਤਾਰੂ ਸਿੰਘ ਜੀ ਦੀ ਸ਼ਹੀਦੀ ਨੂ ਮਨ ਚ ਵਸਾਵੋ ਧਰਮੀ ਸਿੰਘਣੀਆਂ ਵਲ ਵੇਖੋ
ਸਿਰ ਦਿਤੇ ਪਰ ਸਿਰਰ ਨਾ ਦੀਯਾ ਤੇਰਾ ਭਾਣਾ ਮੀਠਾ ਕਰ ਮਨ ਲੀਯਾ
ਪੂਰਨੇ ਜੋ ਉਹ ਜਗ ਤੇ ਪਾ ਗਏ ਮੋਤ ਨੂੰ ਹਸ ਹਸ ਗਲੇ ਲਗਾ ਗਏ
ਸਦਾ ਸਦਾ ਲਈ ਅਮਰ ਓਹ ਹੋ ਗਏ, ਅਨਿਆਂ ਵਿਰੁਧ ਜੋ ਡਟ ਖਲੇ ਗਏ
ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਦੇ ਵਾਰਸ ਕਹਾਓਣ ਵਾਲਿਉ, ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਦੀ ਯਾਦ ਨੂ ਸੀਸ ਝੁਕਾਓਣ ਵਾਲਿਉ
ਆਪਣੇ ਅੰਦਰ ਝਾਤੀ ਮਾਰੋ, ਅਪਿਣੇ ਕੀਤੇ ਨੂੰ ਚਿਤਾਰੋ
ਕੋਮ ਜੋ ਵਿਰਸਾ ਭੁਲ ਜਾਂਦੀ ਏ, ਵਾਂਗ ਕਖਾਂ ਦੇ ਰੁਲ ਜਾਂਦੀ ਏ
ਕੋਈ ਉਸ ਨੂੰ ਯਾਦ ਨਹੀ ਕਰਦਾ, ਨ ਕੋਈ ਉਸ ਦੀ ਹਾਮੀ ਭਰਦਾ ਨਾ ਕੋਈ ਉਸ ਦੇ ਨੇੜੇ ਖੜਦਾ
ਵਿਰਸੇ ਨੂੰ ਜੋ ਭੁਲ ਜਾਂਦੇ ਨੇ, ਮੁਕਦੇ ਮੁਕਦੇ ਮੁਕਦੇ ਮੁਕ ਜਾਂਦੇ ਨੇ
ਹੋਈ ਜੋ ਭੁਲ, ਉਸ ਨੂੰ ਸੁਧਾਰੋ, ਮੋਹਰ ਗੁਰਾਂ ਦੀ ਨੂੰ ਖਿਆਰੋ
ਏਵੈ ਜਗ ਤੇ ਮਾਣ ਵਧਾਵੋ, ਮੂੰਹ ਮੰਗੀਆ ਮੁਰਾਦਾਂ ਪਾਵੋ

ਹਰਜੀਤ ਸਿੰਘ

ਇਕ ਪਰਮਾਣੂੰ

ਬੰਦਾ ਇਹੀ ਸੋਚੀ ਜਾਵੇ, ਮੈਂ ਹੋ ਗਿਆਂ ਹਰ ਕੰਮ ਵਿਚ ਮਾਹਿਰ ਜਿਤ ਲਏ ਆਕਾਸ਼ ਪਤਾਲ ਮੈਂ ਸਾਰੇ ।
ਚੰਦ ਤੇ ਮੈਂ ਗੱਡ ਤੇ ਓਡੇ, ਤੇ ਹਜ਼ਾਰਾਂ ਸੈਟੇਲਾਈਟ ਪੁਲਾੜ ਵਿਚ ਛੱਡੇ ।

ਬਣਾ ਦਿੱਤੀਆਂ ਮੈਂ ਬੁਲਟ ਟਰੇਨਾਂ ਤੇ ਪਲੇਨ (Plane) ਸਾਊਂਡ ਤੇ ਵੀ ਛੇਤੀ ਉਡਣ ਵਾਲੇ ।
ਕਲੋਨ (Clone) ਬਣਾਉਣ ਦੀ ਮੈਂ ਜਿਤ ਲਈ ਬਾਜ਼ੀ ਕਈ ਜਾਨਵਰ ਪੰਛੀ, ਤੇ Human ਪਾਰਟ ਵੀ ਮੈਂ ਆਪ ਬਣਾਂ ਲਏ ।

ਅਰਬਾਂ ਤੇ ਕਰੋੜਾਂ ਦੇ ਵਿਡ ਮੈਂ ਨਿਤ ਭਰਦਾ ਤੇ ਨਾਲੇ ਦਿੰਦਾਂ ਹਾਂ ਰੁਜ਼ਗਾਰ ।
ਐਂਵੇ ਲੋਕੀ ਰੱਬ ਰੱਬ ਕਰਦੇ ਰੱਬ ਤੋਂ ਤਾਂ ਮੈਂ ਲੰਘ ਗਿਆਂ ਪਾਰ ।

ਬੰਦੇ ਦੀ ਇਸ ਸੋਚ ਤੇ ਕੁਦਰਤ, ਹੋਈ ਹੈਰਾਨ ਇਹ ਸੋਚ ਤਾਂ ਤੋੜਨੀ ਪੈਣੀ, ਨਹੀਂ ਤਾਂ ਇਸ ਨੇ ਕਰ ਲੈਣੈ ਵੱਡਾ ਨੁਕਸਾਨ ।
ਕੁਦਰਤ ਇਕ ਪਰਮਾਣੂੰ ਛੱਡਿਆਂ, ਕਰੋਨਾ ਜਿਸ ਦਾ ਨਾਮ ਪਤਾ ਨਾ ਲਗੇ ਇਹ ਕਿਥੋਂ ਆਇਆ, ਤੇ ਕਿਹੜਾ ਇਸ ਦਾ ਮੁਕਾਮ ।

ਵ੍ਹਾਨ ਚੀਨ ਵਿਚ ਤਰਥਲੀ ਪਾ ਕੇ, ਇਹ ਚਲਿਆ ਦੁਨੀਆਂ ਨੂੰ ਅਜਮਾਣ, ਯੂਰਪ ਏਸ਼ੀਆ ਵਿਚ ਵਿਛਾ ਕੇ ਸੈਂਬਰ ।
ਇਸ ਅਮਰੀਕਾ ਵਲ ਹੈ ਕੀਤਾ ਧਿਆਨ, ਮੱਖੀਆ ਵਾਂਗੂ ਮਰ ਰਹੀ ਖਲਕਤ, ਵਧਦਾ ਜਾਵੇ ਹਰ ਰੋਜ਼ ਗਿਣਾਨ ।

ਵਪਾਰ ਦੁਨੀਆਂ ਦਾ ਸਭ ਬੰਦ ਹੋ ਗਿਆ, ਨੌਕਰੀਆਂ ਤੇ ਲੱਗੀ ਲਗਾ ਮਜ਼ਦੂਰ ਦਾ ਹੋਇਆ ਸਭ ਤੋਂ ਵਧ ਨੁਕਸਾਨ ।
ਸਾਰੀ ਦੁਨੀਆ ਵਿਚ ਲਾਕਆਊਟ ਕਰਫੀਊ ਲਗਾ ਬੰਦੇ ਬੁਢੇ ਰੱਖੇ ਦੂਰੀ, ਟਾੱਚ ਨ ਕਰੇ ਇਕ ਦੂਜੇ ਨੂੰ ਇਨਸਾਨ ।

ਕੁਦਰਤ ਸਬਕ ਸਿਖਾ ਰਹੀ, ਬੰਦੇ ਮੂੰਹ ਤੇ ਲਾ ਕੇ ਰੱਖ ਲਗਾਮ ਨਾਂ ਮਾਰ ਤਰੱਕੀ ਦੀਆ ਡੀਂਗਾਂ ।
ਲਾ ਬਰੇਕ ਕਿਰਦਾਰ ਨੂੰ, ਸਲੋ ਕਰ ਵਧਦੀ ਰਫਤਾਰ ਨੂੰ, ਓਜੜ ਗਿਆ ਜੇ ਇਹ ਗੁਲਸ਼ਨ, ਕਿਥੋਂ ਲਿਆਵੇਗਾ ਗੁਲਜ਼ਾਰ ਨੂੰ ।

ਧਰਤੀ ਦੇ ਬਦਨ ਤੇ ਜੇ ਚਲਾਏਗਾ ਕੈਂਚੀ ਇਸ ਤਰਾਂ ਤਾਂ ਲੈ ਕੇ ਆਵੇਗਾ ਹੋਰ ਵੀ ਵੱਡੇ ਤੁਫਾਨ ਨੂੰ ।
ਸੋਚ ਇਹ ਕਰ ਰਿਹਾ ਹੈ ਕੌਣ- ਇਹੀ ਹੈ ਕੁਦਰਤ ਜਿਸ ਨੇ ਹਿਲਾ ਕੇ ਰਖ ਦਿਤਾ ਹੈ ਸਾਰੇ ਜਹਾਨ ਨੂੰ ॥

ਹਰਬੰਸ ਮਠਾੜੂ

ਗੁਰੂ ਨਾਨਕ ਮਿਸ਼ਨ

ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਨਾਨਕ ਪਾਤਸ਼ਾਹ ਦਾ 550ਵਾਂ ਪ੍ਰਕਾਸ਼ ਪੁਰਬ ਸਾਰੀ ਦੁਨਿਆ ਵਿੱਚ ਬਹੁਤ ਧੂਮ-ਧਾਮ ਨਾਲ ਮਨਾਇਆ ਜਾ ਰਿਹਾ ਹੈ। ਜਿੱਥੇ ਸਿੱਖ ਧਰਮ ਦੇ ਲੋਗ ਇਸ ਨੂੰ ਉਚੇਚੇ ਤੌਰ ਤੇ ਮਨਾ ਰਹੇ ਹਨ, ਉੱਥੇ ਹੋਰ ਧਰਮਾਂ ਦੇ ਲੋਗ ਵੀ ਇਸੇ ਤਰਾਂ ਹੀ ਇਸ ਦਿਨ ਨੂੰ ਮਨਾ ਰਹੇ ਹਨ ਜਿਸ ਤਰ੍ਹਾਂ ਗੁਰੂ ਨਾਨਕ ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਦੇ ਵੀ ਇਸ਼ਟ ਜਾਂ ਪੀਰ ਹੋਣ। ਜਗਤ ਗੁਰੂ, ਧੰਨ ਗੁਰੂ ਨਾਨਕ।

ਸਾਰੇ ਧਰਮ ਬਰਾਬਰ ਹਨ। ਸਾਰੇ ਧਰਮ ਉਸ ਰੱਬ ਦੀ ਇਬਾਦਤ ਕਰਨ ਦੀ ਗਲ ਕਰਦੇ ਹਨ, ਫਿਰ ਫਰਕ ਕੀ ਹੈ?

ਇਕ ਪਾਸੇ ਮੰਦਰ ਹਨ, ਇਕ ਪਾਸੇ ਮਸਜਿਦਾਂ ਹਨ, ਇਕ ਪਾਸੇ ਗੁਰਦੁਆਰੇ ਹਨ, ਫਿਰ ਫਰਕ ਕੀ ਹੈ?

ਇਕ ਪਾਸੇ ਭਗਵਾ ਝੰਡਾ ਹੈ, ਇਕ ਪਾਸੇ ਹਰਾ ਝੰਡਾ ਹੈ, ਇਕ ਪਾਸੇ ਕੇਸਰੀ ਨਿਸਾਨ ਹੈ, ਫਿਰ ਫਰਕ ਕੀ ਹੈ?

ਇਕ ਪਾਸੇ ਗੀਤਾ ਤੇ ਰਾਮਾਇਣ ਹਨ, ਇਕ ਪਾਸੇ ਕੁਰਾਨੇ ਸਰੀਫ ਹੈ, ਇਕ ਪਾਸੇ ਧੰਨ ਸ੍ਰੀ ਗੁਰੂ ਗਰੰਥ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਹਨ, ਫਿਰ ਫਰਕ ਕੀ ਹੈ?

ਇਕ ਪਾਸੇ ਚੁੰਨੀਆ ਚੜ੍ਹਾ ਕੇ ਪੜਦੇ ਢੱਕੇ ਜਾਂਦੇ ਹਨ, ਇਕ ਪਾਸੇ ਚੱਦਰਾਂ ਚੜਾਈਆ ਜਾਂਦੀਆਂ ਹਨ, ਇਕ ਪਾਸੇ ਰੁਮਾਲਾ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਚੜਾਏ ਜਾਂਦੇ ਹਨ, ਫਿਰ ਫਰਕ ਕੀ ਹੈ?

ਜਾਤ-ਪਾਤ ਦੇ ਇਸ ਰੋਗ ਤੋਂ ਵੀ ਕੋਈ ਵਾਂਝਾਂ ਨਹੀਂ ਹੈ, ਫਿਰ ਫਰਕ ਕੀ ਹੈ?

ਹਰ ਧਰਮ ਅਸਥਾਨ ਤੇ ਲੰਗਰ ਵੀ ਕਿਸੇ ਨਾਂ ਕਿਸੇ ਢੰਗ ਨਾਲ ਵਰਤਾਇਆ ਜਾਂਦਾ ਹੈ, ਫਿਰ ਫਰਕ ਕੀ ਹੈ?

ਹਰ ਧਰਮ ਵਿੱਚ ਦਾਨ-ਪੁੰਨ ਕਰਕੇ ਧਨ ਪਦਾਰਥ ਦੇ ਸੁੱਖਾਂ ਦੀ ਪ੍ਰਾਪਤੀ ਦੀ ਗੱਲ ਕੀਤੀ ਜਾਂਦੀ ਹੈ, ਫਿਰ ਫਰਕ ਕੀ ਹੈ?

ਹਰ ਧਰਮ ਵਿੱਚ ਸੇਵਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਪਰਮਾਤਮਾ ਨਾਲ ਜੁੜਨ ਦੀ ਗੱਲ ਕੀਤੀ ਜਾਂਦੀ ਹੈ, ਫਿਰ ਫਰਕ ਕੀ ਹੈ?

ਹਰ ਧਰਮ ਵਿੱਚ ਅਰਦਾਸ ਕਰਨ ਦੀ ਗੱਲ ਕੀਤੀ ਜਾਂਦੀ ਹੈ, ਪਰਮਾਤਮਾ ਕੋਲੋਂ ਸਾਰੇ ਸੁੱਖ ਮੰਗਨ ਦੀ ਗੱਲ ਕੀਤੀ ਜਾਂਦੀ ਹੈ, ਫਿਰ ਫਰਕ ਕੀ ਹੈ?

ਕੀ ਅਸੀਂ ਦਾਅਵੇ ਨਾਲ ਕਹਿ ਸਕਦੇ ਹਾਂ ਕਿ ਸਿੱਖ ਧਰਮ ਬਾਕੀ ਦੇ ਧਰਮਾਂ ਨਾਲੋਂ ਵਖੁਰਾ ਜਾਂ ਸ਼੍ਰੇਸ਼ਠ ਹੈ? ਕੀ ਗੁਰੂ ਨਾਨਕ ਦਾ ਮੌਕੇ ਤੱਕ ਜਾਣਾ ਜਾਂ ਸਿੱਧਾ ਤੱਕ ਪਹੁੰਚ ਕਰਨ ਦਾ ਕਾਰਨ ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਸਿੱਖ ਧਰਮ ਦੇ ਅੰਨ੍ਹਯਾਈ (followers) ਬਣਾਉਣਾ ਸੀ? ਬਲਕਿ, ਕੀ ਗੁਰੂ ਨਾਨਕ ਦਾ ਮਿਸ਼ਨ ਇਕ ਨਵੇਂ ਧਰਮ ਦੀ ਸਥਾਪਨਾ ਕਰਨ ਦਾ ਸੀ?

ਫਰਕ ਪਤਾ ਕੀ ਹੈ? ਜਿੱਥੇ ਬਾਕੀ ਦੇ ਧਰਮ ਇਕ ਪਰਮਾਤਮਾ ਦੀ ਹੋਂਦ ਨੂੰ ਮੰਨਦੇ ਹਨ ਅਤੇ ਇਕ ਮਨੁੱਖ ਦੀ ਹੋਂਦ ਨੂੰ ਮੰਨਦੇ ਹਨ, ਉਹ ਮਨੁੱਖ ਨੂੰ ਸੇਵਾ ਤੇ ਸਿਮਰਨ ਕਰਕੇ ਪਰਮਾਤਮਾ ਨਾਲ ਜੁੜਨ ਦੀ ਗੱਲ ਕਰਦੇ ਹਨ, ਪਰਮਾਤਮਾ ਨੂੰ ਖੁਸ਼ ਕਰਕੇ ਉਸ ਕੋਲੋਂ ਸਾਰੇ ਸੁੱਖਾਂ ਦੀ ਪਰਾਪਤੀ ਦੀ ਗੱਲ ਕਰਦੇ ਹਨ, ਉੱਥੇ ਗੁਰੂ ਨਾਨਕ ਦਾ ਘਰ ਇਹ ਸਿਖਾਉਂਦਾ 'ਸੀ' (ਹੁਣ ਨਹੀਂ) ਕਿ, 'ਮਨ ਤੂੰ ਜੋਤਿ ਸਰੂਪੁ ਹੈ ਆਪਣਾ ਮੂਲੁ ਪਛਾਣੁ,' ਗੁਰੂ ਨਾਨਕ ਦਾ ਘਰ ਇਹ ਸਿਖਾਉਂਦਾ 'ਸੀ' ਕਿ, 'ਸਭੁ ਗੋਬਿੰਦੁ ਹੈ ਸਭੁ ਗੋਬਿੰਦੁ ਹੈ ਗੋਬਿੰਦੁ ਬਿਨੁ ਨਹੀ ਕੋਈ', ਕਿ ਪਰਮਾਤਮਾ ਇਕ ਹੈ, ਪਰ ਉਹ ਪਰਮਾਤਮਾ ਉੱਪਰ ਦੂਰ ਕਿਧਰੇ ਅਸਮਾਨ ਵਿੱਚ ਆਪਣਾ ਮਹਿਲ ਸਜਾ ਕੇ ਨਹੀਂ ਬੈਠਾ, ਬਲਕਿ ਜੇ ਕੁੱਝ ਵੀ ਤੂੰ ਦੇਖ ਰਿਹਾ ਹੈ ਇਹ ਉਸ ਦਾ ਹੀ ਰੂਪ ਹੈ, 'ਸਭ ਮਹਿ ਜੋਤਿ ਜੋਤਿ ਹੈ ਸੋਇ ॥ ਤਿਸਦੈ ਚਾਨਣਿ ਸਭ ਮਹਿ ਚਾਨਣੁ ਹੋਇ ॥' ਫਿਰ ਇਸ ਦਾ ਮਤਲਬ ਇਹ ਹੋਇਆ ਕਿ ਜਿ ਇਹ ਸਭ ਕੁਝ ਪਰਮਾਤਮਾ ਹੀ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਫਿਰ ਮੈਂ ਵੀ ਉਸੇ ਪਰਮਾਤਮਾ ਦਾ ਹੀ ਰੂਪ ਹਾਂ, ਮੇਰੇ ਨਾਲ ਵੱਸ ਰਹੇ ਪ੍ਰਾਣੀ, ਭਾਵੇਂ ਮੈਨੂੰ ਚੰਗੇ ਲੱਗਦੇ ਹਨ ਜਾਂ ਨਹੀਂ, ਉਹ ਵੀ ਪਰਮਾਤਮਾ ਦਾ ਹੀ ਰੂਪ ਹਨ।

SFV VOICE



SFV participated in Fairfax County Interfaith National Day of Prayer (May 7, 2020)

Fairfax County sent us the following thank you note:

"Thank you so very much for coming together today for the National Day of Prayer, Interfaith Prayers Program. Here is the link for all the prayers. SFV prayer starts at about 48 minute marker.

https://zoom.us/rec/share/98pTAb-o30VJbIHp61i0Ro0cDorhaaa81ncf_PZbnh0HgTDgl-EvRwfSW18JWWZD“

Fairfax County Interfaith Community for Dialogues (ICD) shows solidarity with Sikhs

On Mar 28, 2020, SFV received the following message from Marie Monsen of ICD:

Mr. Sidhu,

When members of Interfaith Communities for Dialogue (ICD) heard about the terrorist attack on the Sikh Gurdwara in Kabul, Afghanistan last Wednesday, we were horrified and saddened and felt it was important to reach out to the Sikh Foundation of Virginia (SFV) to express our solidarity with the Sikh community. Attached is a formal expression of our support as your community begins the process of healing. We hope it will be a comfort to know that you are not alone.

Peace and blessings,

Marie A. Monsen, chair Emeritus,

SFV Chairman Surjeet Singh Ji Sidhu appreciated the letter from ICD and responded via email:

Subject:Re: Interfaith Communities for Dialogue (ICD) Letter of Support for Sikh Community

Date: Sun, 29 Mar 2020 10:32:03 -0400

From: sidhwan@aol.com

To: Marie A. Monsen <mamonsen@verizon.net>

CC: Pammi Sachdeva <pammisachdeva@gmail.com>, Manjit Taneja <manjittaneja@yahoo.com>

Dear Marie,

On behalf of the Board of Trustees and our entire congregation, I thank you and the ICD members for your support and prayers. This means a lot to us. This was a horrific attack on a place of worship, and may Waheguru (God) show such perpetrators of hate a path of love and tolerance.

Stay safe.

Surjeet S Sidhu
Chairman
Sikh Foundation of Virginia

SFV VOICE



ICD also shared a message of solidarity from Nations and Tribes in Harmony Foundation



Nations and Tribes in Harmony Foundation

Interfaith * Religious Freedom * Local/National/Global Security * Civil Rights * Youth Empowerment

Salaam, Shalom, Peace, Namaste, Sat Sri Akal

Nations and Tribes in Harmony Foundation stands in solidarity with Sikh Community after the horrific terrorist attack in Afghanistan

Tue Mar 31 - 8:30pm-9:45pm Interfaith Virtual Online Solidarity Vigil with Sikh Community
<https://zoom.us/j/227534020> Meeting ID: 227-534-020
or <https://www.facebook.com/events/206611734000387/>

Nations and Tribes in Harmony Foundation is saddened by the terrorist attack against the Sikh Gurdwara (Temple) in Kabul, Afghanistan, which killed 25 people. Our thoughts and prayers are with the Sikh community, the victims, and their families in this difficult time. We condemn terrorism, violence, and hate crimes of any type. All Afghan civilians have been victim to endless wars, civil wars, terrorism, and poverty. We hope and pray for peace and security for all people in Afghanistan.

We are also dismayed that over the past twenty years, Sikh Americans have experienced a rise in hate crimes and physical violence against their communities in the US. In 2018, two Sikh American men were attacked and beaten in California's Central Valley in seemingly random hate-fueled attacks. In 2012, the hate crime terrorist attack against the Sikh Gurdwara in Wisconsin killed six people and injured three. In 2010, two Sikh Americans were tragically killed in Elk Grove, CA, and another two were shot there in 2011, one fatally. Sikh Americans have often been mistaken for American Muslims simply because of their long beards and turbans, and as a result have been targets of hate crimes and threats.

In 2016, hundreds of Muslim scholars and intellectuals from over 120 countries, along with representatives of Islamic and international organizations, as well as leaders from diverse religious groups and nationalities, gathered in Marrakesh to reaffirm the principles of the Charter of Medina at a major conference and to reaffirm the rights of religious minorities in predominantly Muslim lands. Please see the Marrakesh Declaration: <http://www.marrakeshdeclaration.org/>

About Nations and Tribes in Harmony Foundation:

An American Muslim founded foundation focused on multifaith cooperation, religious freedom affirmation, local/national/global security policy, civil rights advocacy, and youth empowerment. Its roots are based on 30 years of practical experience working with people in the US and around the world including Muslim, Protestant, Evangelical Christian, Latter-day Saints, Roman Catholic, Jewish, Hindu, Jain, Sikh, Baha'i, Buddhist, and Zoroastrian faith communities.

God reminds us in the Qur'an: "We have created you from a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know one another. Verily, the most honorable among you is the most pious of you." [The Holy Qur'an, chapter 49, verse 13] You may have heard both of us share this meaningful verse during our countless collaborations over the past many years. It remains one of our deepest inspirations for the work that we do, and the entire purpose behind our creating Nations & Tribes in Harmony Foundation.

Rizwan Jaka & Priscilla Martinez
Nations & Tribes in Harmony Foundation

SFV VOICE



SFV was appreciated by St. Stephens and St. Agnews School for welcoming their 7th grader youth to SFV.

St. Stephen's ✚ St. Agnes School

February 6, 2020

Dear Members of the Sikh Foundation of Virginia,

Thank you so much for the gracious hospitality shown to our 6th grade students and faculty during our Religions of the World field trip last week. The program you planned was well coordinated and thoughtful. I started the academic year with a unit on Sikhism so the students arrived with some background information. However, nothing can compare to first-hand experience to deepen understanding and build empathy. Here is a sampling of reflections shared by my students after the visit:

- I learned that when you walk past Guru Granth Sahib you should bow to show respect.
- I enjoyed hearing the singing and feeling at peace.
- My favorite part was hearing the hymns at the gurdwara because music is one of my favorite things on earth.
- I observed the waving of the fan over the holy book.
- I appreciated learning that the CEO of MasterCard is a Sikh.
- The really enjoyed tasting the Karah Prashad, because it was different and was delicious.
- My favorite part of the day was lunch, because I got to experience langar with my friends.
- The gurdwara was very beautiful and detailed.
- I appreciated the way Sikhs treasure Guru Granth Sahib. The respect is amazing.
- I liked hearing about the history of Guru Nanak and the creation of the Khalsa.
- I learned that you shouldn't point your feet towards the holy book.
- I liked hearing the stories from the author of American Hate.

I am grateful to your members and to your priests for sharing their time, wisdom, and experience with us. It was a treat to hear from Arjun Sethi and to learn about his work and some of the challenges faced by Sikhs in our country. Wishing you all the best!

Kindest Regards,

Handwritten signature of Rebecca P. Cooper in green ink.

Rebecca P. Cooper

GRADES JK-5
400 Fontaine Street
Alexandria, VA 22302

GRADES 6-8
4401 West Braddock Road
Alexandria, VA 22304

GRADES 9-12
1000 St. Stephen's Road
Alexandria, VA 22304

703-751-2700
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Northern Virginia

COVID-19 DMV SEVA

GROCERIES. MEDICINE. DELIVERY.

If you or someone you know is in the age range that is most affected by COVID-19 and need help getting groceries, medicine or any other supplies, please reach out. We will deliver it to you.

| | |
|----------------|--------------|
| Surinder Singh | 571.345.4808 |
| Amandeep Singh | 571.232.1763 |
| Sirtaj Kaur | 703.298.8409 |
| Jujhar Singh | 443.643.6466 |



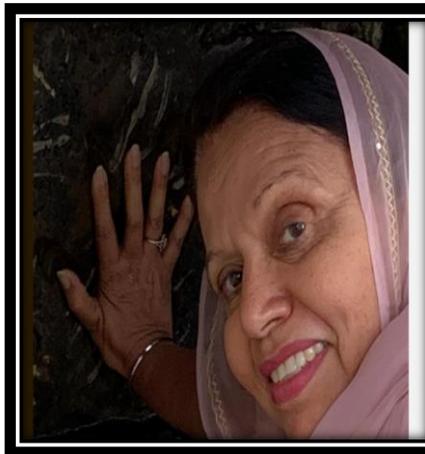
[Angad Kalra 814-574-3285](mailto:Angad.Kalra@sfv.org) also volunteered for this noble service

SFV VOICE



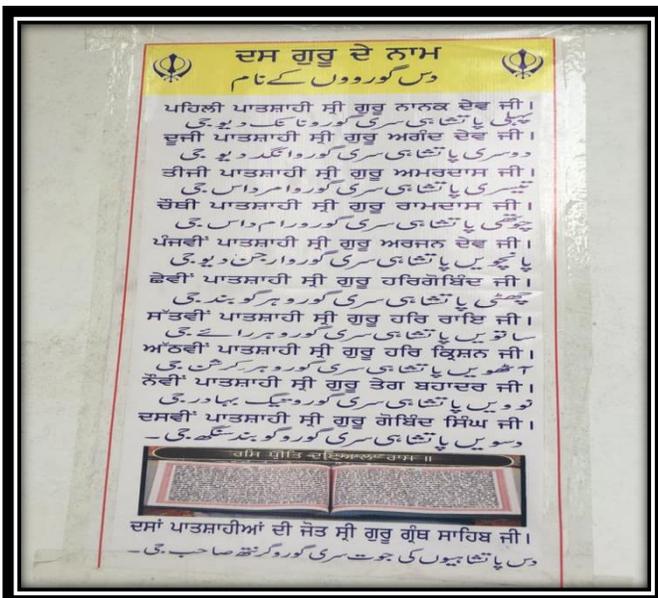
SFV Gallery

SFV Sangat Visits Gurdwaras in Pakistan (Celebrating 550th Birthday of Guru Nanak Dev Ji)



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SFV Youth Participating at the Annual Gurdwara Program in February 2020



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SFV Picnic 2019



SFV Sangat participating in SFV Red Cross Blood Drive

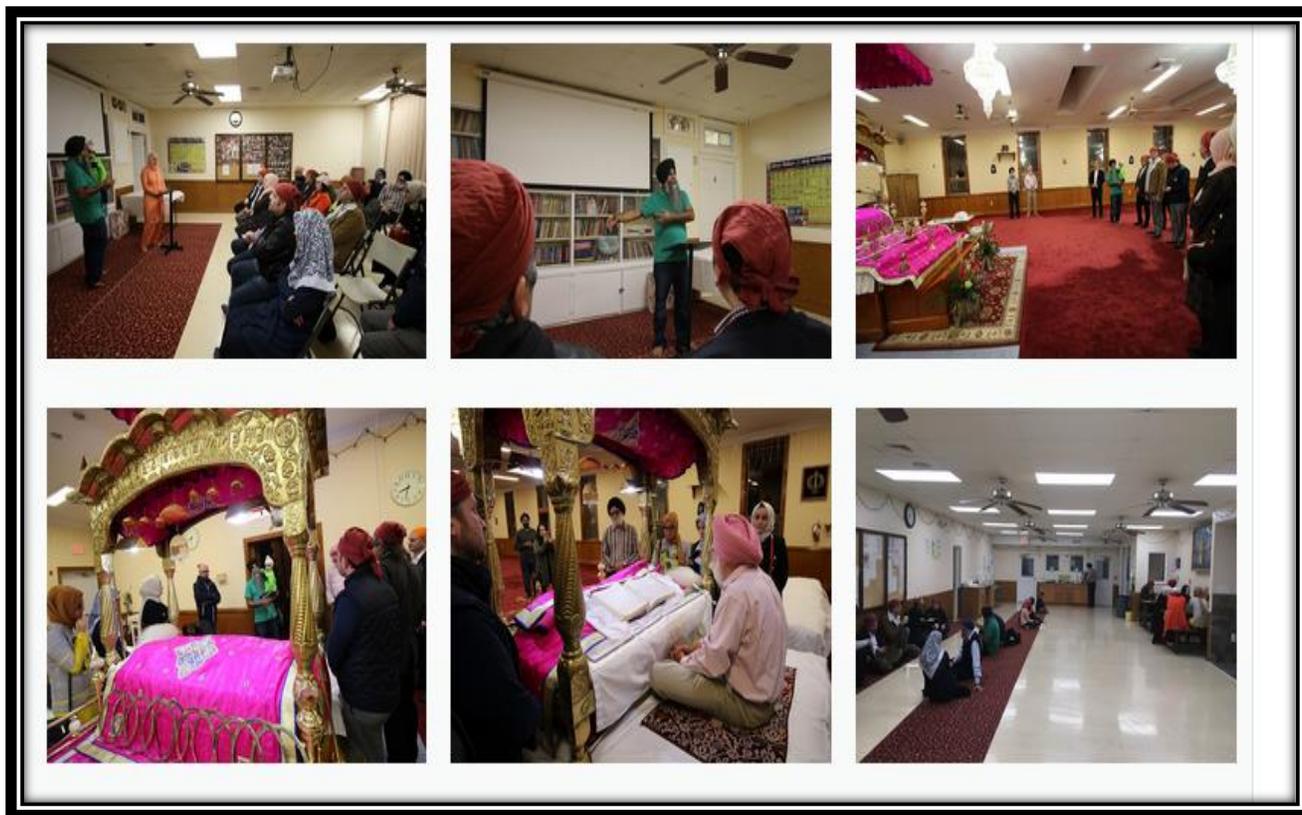


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Interfaith activities at SFV



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SFV VOICE



SFV recognizes Sikhs serving U.S. Army



Washington, D.C. Gurdwaras celebrate 550th Birthday of Guru Nanak Dev Ji



One Hundred 7th Graders from Fairfax County Visit SFV Gurdwara



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SFV VOICE



Editor's Corner

Request to Sangat for contributions to SFV Voice

Respected Sadh Sangat Ji, Please make your voice heard through SFV Voice! Through six-monthly updates from SFV officers and coordinators, and voluntary contributions from the Sangat, the Newsletter also covers:

- The Punjabi/Gurmat school, annual youth camp, and various service projects Katha, kirtan and gurbani vichar programs
- Activities that amplify women's voices Programs for seniors and elders
- Cultural events, annual picnic, and interfaith activities, and Broader concerns of the global Sikh community.

Please share your views on any relevant topic that interests you! We particularly invite contributions from women, youth, and seniors. Your write-ups can be short (just a few paras), or longer (a couple of pages). In English, or in Punjabi. Just send us a final draft, and we'll work with you to get it published!

Contact the Editor, Manjit S. Taneja (ManjitTaneja@yahoo.com 703-585-1078), or any of the editorial team members for more information or clarification. We look forward to hearing from you. Thanks!

Editorial Team: Manjit S. Taneja (Editor); Paramjit Singh Sachdeva, pammisachdeva@gmail.com; Beant Singh Deu, beantsdeu@gmail.com; Navdeep Singh, deepsingh84@gmail.com; and Puneet Kaur, nitakaur89@gmail.com.

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7250 Ox Road, Fairfax Station, VA 22039

Phone: 703 323 8849