

# ONE UNDER WORLD GOD



Understanding religious pluralism that upholds America's founding principles of Truth, Justice, Equality & Freedom

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## More power to Indian minister Sushma Swaraj

External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj has announced that Guru Nanak Devji's 550th birth anniversary will be celebrated in 2019 by all Indian embassies and missions by hosting programs to spread the Sikhism founder's message of brotherhood and sharing. She was also part of the 2+2 summit between Indian and US foreign ministers and defense ministers that made India a NATO like partner of the US. Swaraj will be visiting New York to address the annual UN General Assembly session on September 29.



External Affairs Minister of India Sushma Swaraj with US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo in New Delhi.

## Mr Bagga taking a lead in the community



Philanthropist Darshan Singh Bagga joins Town Of Oyster Bay Supervisor Hon. Joseph Saladino and others at the India Day Parade on August 9 hosted by IDP-USA in Hicksville NY.



Sikh community leader Darshan Singh Bagga joins media mogul Dr. Sudhir Parikh and others at Hicksville Hindu temple to pay tribute to former Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, who passed away in New Delhi on August 16, 2018.



Darshan Singh Bagga, founder of Global Interfaith Foundation and publisher of One World Under God, honored Bobby Kumar, Chairman of Nassau County Commission of Human Rights, as Man of the Year and community leader Indu Jaiswal as Woman of the Year at a function in Hicksville on Aug 9.

By *Sushma Swaraj*

Indian Minister of External Affairs

It is said about Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikh faith, "Satguru Nanak appeared as prakash (light of knowledge) and the fog of ignorance disappeared." Indeed, we celebrate Guru Nanak's birth anniversary as Prakashotsav. We know that this light source appeared 550 years ago. I am pleased to announce that soon we at the External Affairs Ministry as well as Indian Council of Cultural Relations (ICCR) will start celebrating 550th anniversary year (2019) of Guru Nanak Dev ji all over the world.

In this turbulent world, where violence and killings are prevalent, where people are being massacred in the name of religion, through this year-long celebration, we want to spread the message of Guru Nanak and other Sikh gurus.

We want to tell the world that the core of this religion – Sikhism – is Ik Onkar (God is One). Its teaching include nuggets such as: We are the children of one and same Father. First, God created the Light; then, by His Creative Power, He made all beings. Recognize all of mankind as a single caste of humanity. Sikhism even had a very modern message about women: How can you malign the one who gives birth to kings.

We want to tell the world that the Indian tradition and scriptures have always pronounced – Ekam Sat – Truth is One. Guru Granth Sahib is proof of that. This is the only religious scripture in the world which respectfully includes the writings of

saints and mahatmas other than its own founders, irrespective of their caste or religion. Baba Farid (Muslim) is there as is Ravidas (born in a low caste).

I was recently in Jerusalem in Israel and had the chance to visit a serai where Baba Farid stayed during his journeys. It is maintained by an Ansari family from India. Like Baba Farid, Guru Nanak also traveled far and wide.

The Sikh gurus left their

teaching for posterity in the form of their holy book, Guru Granth Sahib, and said follow it as your guru. This meeting today opened with singing of the verse 'Koi bole Ram Ram, koi Khudaye'. God is remembered by different names by different people. So if God is one, and we all are his children then where is the scope for any feud? This message of Guru Nanak that we humans are all brothers and sisters needs to be spread in

the world.

There are 3 practical teachings of Guru Nanak: Kirat karo, vand chhako and naam japo. The first means, don't just vegetate, work to earn a living. This is also the inspirational message of Lord Krishna in the Gita: do your karma. The second says, share the fruits of what you have justly earned with the poor and needy. This is an important message in this era of protectionism, of I, me, myself. I am

# The turbulent world today needs Guru Nanak's message of peace and goodwill



Transcribed from a speech Sushma Swaraj gave in Hindi on August 12 to announce how the Indian government will take the teachings of Sikhism to the world while celebrating Guru Nanak Dev ji's 550th anniversary year in 2019. The event at the center for non-resident Indians in New Delhi was organized by the Indian Council for Cultural Relations and the World Punjabi Organisation.

proud to say that if there is gurdwara in a neighborhood, people there never starve. I am reminded of meeting some visiting Indian students from Toronto. They told me, they get a fulfilling meal only once a week on Sundays at the gurdwara. Not only that, they said, "At the gurdwara we are told, bring your tiffin, and carry home food for dinner too." What a tradition worth emulating by all!

The third teaching is, pray to God. If we are the children of God, then don't forget him. Contemplate on him. Meditate.

So we in the Indian government have decided that utilizing the occasion of the 550th anniversary year of Guru Nanak, we want to spread the teachings of Sikhism in the entire world through gurbani/kirtan, seminars, and conferences.

The Ministry of External Affairs will do its work, as will the ICCR. But this noble cause needs the help of everybody like the World Punjabi Organisation. Join hands with us. Let us reach out to all countries, big or small, even if there is no Sikh diaspora at a certain place. We want to tell the world that Sikhism is one religion which has a timely message of peace, goodwill and harmonious co-existence.

## Sushma Swaraj: India's best-loved politician

The Wall Street Journal has called Indian Minister of External Affairs Sushma Swaraj as India's best-loved politician, mostly due to "her tireless attention to Indians in distress abroad.

It is not a flash in the pan. Sushma has enjoyed a long and successful career as a politician and minister at various levels.

Born in 1952 in Ambala in what was then Punjab state, she obtained her law degree from the Panjab University, Chandigarh and practiced as a lawyer in the Supreme Court for some time.

Sushma Swaraj began her political career with the stu-

dent organization Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad in the 1970s. Her husband, Swaraj Kaushal, was closely associated with the socialist leader George Fernandes and Sushma became a part of Fernandes's (indicted for subversion) legal defense team in 1975 during the Emergency. She actively participated in Jayaprakash Narayan's Total Revolution Movement. After the Emergency, she joined the Bharatiya Janata Party.

She was elected to the Haryana State Legislative Assembly and became a Cabinet Minister state at a young age of 25.

Graduating to national politics, Sushma has been elected seven times as a Member of Parliament. In 2004, she was honored with the "Outstanding Parliamentarian Award". As central minister she has held the portfolios of Information and Broadcasting, Telecommunications, Health & Family Welfare and Parliamentary Affairs. When her party BJP was out of power, she became Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha from 2009 to 2014. After Prime Minister Narendra Modi took the reins of the country, she was made Minister for External Affairs in May 2014, the second

woman after Mrs Indira Gandhi to hold this key portfolio.

Sushma Swaraj is married to Swaraj Kaushal, a designated senior advocate of Supreme Court of India who served as Governor of Mizoram from 1990 to 1993. Swaraj Kaushal was also a Member of Parliament from 1998 to 2004. They have a daughter, Bansuri, who is an alumnus of The University of Oxford and a Barrister at Law from The Hon'ble Inn of Inner Temple in London.

Having had a kidney transplant two years ago, Sushma is likely not to contest the next parliamentary election in 2019.



As External Affairs Minister, Sushma Swaraj will represent India at the annual UN General Assembly session and address it on September 29. She had addressed UNGA last year also.

The Gadar Movement was the saga of remarkable courage, valor and determination of overseas Indians to free India from the shackles of British slavery. Indians had come to Canada and the United States either for higher education or for economic opportunities.

Instead they imbibed the fire and zeal of revolutionaries and became the trailblazers of freedom struggle for their motherland.

Here is a brief history of how the Gadar revolutionaries left a legacy to emulate by the likes of Bhagat Singh and Chandra Shekhar Azad, household names in India.

On April 23, 1913, some patriotic Indians in Astoria, Oregon, organized a meeting where Har Dayal, who had been a faculty member at Stanford University and had inspired many students at the University of California at Berkeley for independence of India, was the invited speaker. At this meeting, the Hindustan Association of the Pacific Coast was formed with a major objective to liberate India with the force of arms, just as Americans had done more than a century ago. Sohan Singh Bhakna was

# Punjabis in US trailed the blaze for freeing India from the British

By Inder Singh and Darshan Singh Bagga

elected President while Har Dayal became the General Secretary.

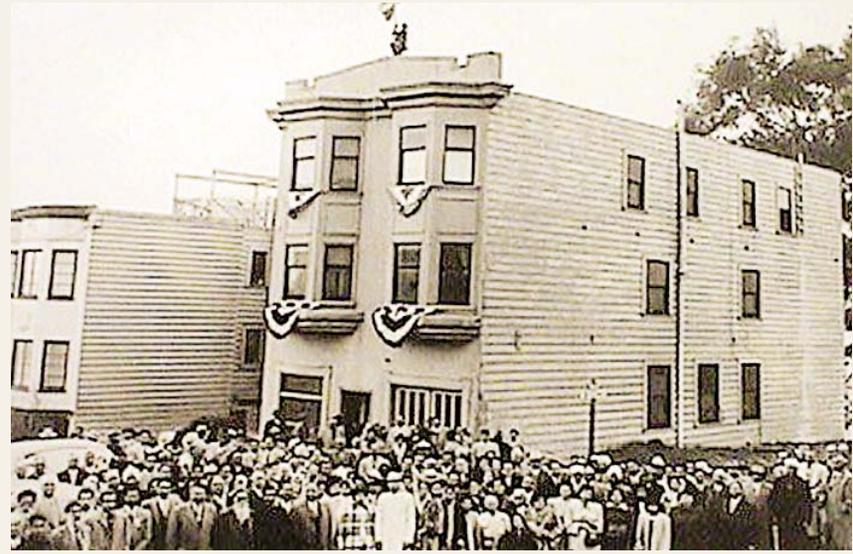
The Hindustan Association with headquarter in San Francisco, began publishing a magazine, Gadar (meaning 'mutiny'), to promote the aims, objectives and activities of the organization. It was sent free to thousands of overseas Indians regularly. In a short period of time, the Hindustan Association became known as the Gadar party. Some Indians opened branches of the Gadar party in other countries.

In 1914, World War I broke out. The Gadarites considered it a great opportunity to expel the British from India while the British Indian troops would be busy fighting the war. The Gadarites persuaded several thousand overseas Indians to go to India to launch a revolution. They also drew plans to infiltrate the

Indian army on reaching India and excite the soldiers to fight against the British Empire, and free India from the shackles of British imperialism.

The Gadar leadership decided that it would be important to train some people so they could take part in the planned revolt in India. Kartar Singh Sarabha was sent to New York to learn flying airplanes. Master Udham Sing Kasel, who had worked in the artillery side in Hong Kong army, started teaching the use of different kinds of weapons to a group of Gadarites. Harnam Singh Kotla Naudh Singh began learning how to make bombs, he however lost an arm while testing a bomb.

Some traitors leaked out the secret plans of revolt to British spies. The Gadarites' dream to see mother India liberated was foiled. Many



Gadar Memorial Hall in San Francisco was the birth place of the Gadar party. It is now being rebuilt with funding from the Indian government.

Gadarites were arrested and prosecuted, 45 were hanged to death, 68 were given life sentence and several others were given varying terms of imprisonment.

## KOMAGATA MARU INCIDENT

Indians in Canada were very unhappy with the new

*Continued on page 4...*

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## Three Gadar leaders

### Sohan Singh Bhakna



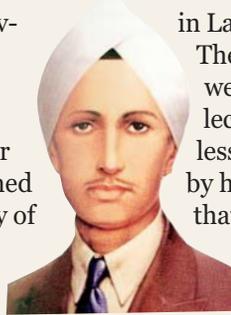
Born in a village near Amritsar, the enterprising youth left for foreign shores and ended up working in a timber mill in California, where the harsh insults were too hard to swallow for the proud Sikh. Interactions with others in the community led to the forming of Hindustan Association of the Pacific Coast, with him as President. He contacted the people on board the ill-fated Komagata Maru and personally sent them arms to take on the British when the ship returned to Calcutta. He himself set sail for India to launch the mutiny. Some British agents revealed him to the authorities and he was arrested. He was put on trial with other Gadar leaders in the Lahore conspiracy case. He was sentenced to death, but later it was commuted and he spent 16 years in Indian jails. Even after his release he continued to agitate for the rights of farmers and to seek the release of other Gadarites languishing in jails. He died in 1968 in Amritsar.

He is lesser known than Bhagat Singh, though both revolutionaries attained martyrdom at a young age for the cause of India's freedom. But even Bhagat Singh is known to have called Kartar Singh Sarabha his guru for being an inspiration for his dedication to the cause of freedom and justice. On Bhagat Singh's arrest, a photo of Sarabha was recovered from him.

Born in Ludhiana in Punjab, Kartar Singh Sarabha was sent to USA for higher education and better prospects when he was 16. He reached San Francisco to study at University of California in Berkeley. At immigration, he was subjected to humiliating questioning because "Indians are slaves" he was told. At the university he became a student leader and met likeminded Indians and came to learn more about injustices being meted out to the Indian expatriates. When Gadar party was formed, he became its key member. He was put in charge of the party's mouthpiece, Gadar, in Punjabi language, which he edited and printed.

The desire to get India liberated burnt so strongly in him that at a meeting in Sacramento in 1913, he jumped on to the stage and began to sing:

### Martyr Kartar Singh Sarabha



"Chalo chaliye desh nu yudh karen, eho aakhiri vachan te farman ho jaye" (Come! let us go and join the battle of freedom; the final call has come!)" Kartar Singh was one of the first to follow his own call. He left the US in 1914

to overthrow the British in India. During the struggle, he was arrested, tried in Lahore with other Gadarites. The judges during his trial were impressed by his intellectual skills, but nevertheless, he was sentenced to death by hanging. The court observed that Kartar Singh was the most dangerous of all the rebels. He was just 19 years old when he was hanged to death in 1915. The song on his lips when he kissed the gallows was self-composed; translated from Punjabi it reads:

*Serving one's country is very difficult It is easy to talk*

*Anyone who walked on that path Must endure millions of calamities*

Besides many memorials and institutions named after him, Punjabi novelist Nanak Singh wrote a novel called Ikk Mian Do Talwaran based on his life. In the 1970s two movies eulogized his life.

### Lala Har Dayal



Lala Har Dayal's journey from middle class Mathur family in Delhi to the path of revolution passed through academia. He was a Government of India scholar at Oxford in 1905 and was in England preparing for entry into the Indian Civil Service when he was exposed to the anarchist ideology. Returning to India, he was unwelcome because of his radical writings. He ended up in the USA in 1911 and landed a job at Stanford as Professor of Sanskrit and Philosophy. He helped to organize the Gadar movement from its inception. Sensing trouble, the British Government pressed the US Government to arrest him for spreading anarchist propaganda. He managed to flee to Berlin. Even after the First World War his exile did not end. He lived for a decade in Sweden, lecturing on Indian philosophy, art and literature. His book 'Hints of Self Culture' is considered a classic. He breathed his last in Philadelphia in 1939 while on a lecture tour of the US.

### » Gadar Memorial Hall, San Francisco:

The birthplace of the Gadar party, it is situated at 5 Wood Street in San Francisco's Richmond District and was refurbished in 1974. It has some framed pictures of Gadarites and martyrs on the walls

Statue of Shaheed Kartar Singh Sarabha in Desh Bhagat Park Ghal Kalan, Moga in Punjab.

of the main hall and an assortment of books and memorabilia. It is used by the Consulate General of India for celebrating Indian National Days. In 2013, Indian government announced funds to upgrade the Gadar hall

## In memory of Gadarites

into a functional library and museum. The project involves \$9 million tear down and reconstruction of the building.

### » Desh Bhagat Yadgar Hall, Jalandhar, India:

This two-story building on Grand Trunk Road houses an auditorium, an exhibition hall displaying portraits of Gadarites and other revolutionary nationalists, a library and lecture theater.

» The Indian Culture Ministry has sanctioned establishment at Indira Gandhi National Open University the Shaheed Kartar Singh Sarabha Chair that will work to compile memoirs and books related to revolutionary activities during India's struggle against imperialist forces.

### » Colleges named after

**Kartar Singh Sarabha:** Shaheed Kartar Singh Sarabha College of Nursing, Ludhiana, Shaheed Kartar Singh Sarabha Ayurvedic College And Hospital, Sarabha and Shaheed Kartar Singh Sarabha Dental College.

### » Kartar Singh Sarabha Memorial and Statue in downtown, Ludhiana - Next to Clock Tower.

#### Gadar Memorial Hall, Hicksville, NY

A great admirer of the contribution of these first freedom fighters, Mr Darshan Singh Bagga, Founder of Global Interfaith Foundation, is creating this memorial for the Gadarites in his Bagga Plaza II in Hicksville in Long Island. The plan is to put up their photographs on the walls and create a library. It will be inaugurated soon.

## Punjabis in US trailed the blaze for freeing India...

*Continued from page 3*

regulation which effectively prevented Indian immigration. A resourceful Indian in Singapore, Gurdit Singh, chartered a Japanese vessel Komagata Maru to circumvent the Canadian exclusion regulations and brought 376 passengers in May 1914. The Canadian government refused disembarking of the ship at Vancouver. The Indian community in Canada were outraged. After legal wrangling, only 24 passengers were allowed to immigrate and the ship was forced to return to India. After the ship docked near Calcutta, the British troops opened fire on returning passengers with some fatalities and imprisoned over 200. The brutal Komagata Maru incident generated a wave of resentment against the British and encouraged new converts to the Gadar cause.

After the unsuccessful

attempt of the Gadarites to gain freedom for India, there were many Indians who had the burning desire to liberate India. Lala Lajpat Rai, one of the prominent leaders of India's Freedom Movement came to the US in December 1914 to elicit American support for the Freedom Movement. He founded the Indian Home Rule League in 1917 in New York and in 1918, started publishing Young India monthly. But he had to leave for India in 1919. Later, Indian community activists like J.J. Singh, Anup Singh, Haridas Muzumdar, Syud Hossain, Mubarak Ali Khan, Krishanlal Shridharani used their writings, speeches, and meetings with elected officials and people of influence to gain the sympathy, support, and endorsement of the American people, members of the US Congress, and the President of America for the independence of India.

## Gandhi's 150th anniversary celebration kicked off in Long Island

### Huntington, NY:

Supervisor of Huntington Chad A. Lupinacci co-hosted the launch of a year of festivities commemorating Mahatma Gandhi's 150th birthday with Arvind Vora and Bakul Matalia of the Shanti Fund and Hon. Sandeep Chakravorty, Consul General of India in New York, where they were joined by Town and State Officials on September 7 at

the Town Hall. "Known as Mahatma, or 'the great souled one,' Gandhi was revered the world over for his nonviolent philosophy of passive resistance and his devout Hindu faith," said Supervisor Lupinacci. "Gandhi was quoted: 'The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others.' Gandhi lived, until his last day, by this philosophy."



Dignitaries and Shanti Fund members with Huntington Supervisor Chad A. Lupinacci and Indian Consul General Sandeep Chakravorty at the event.

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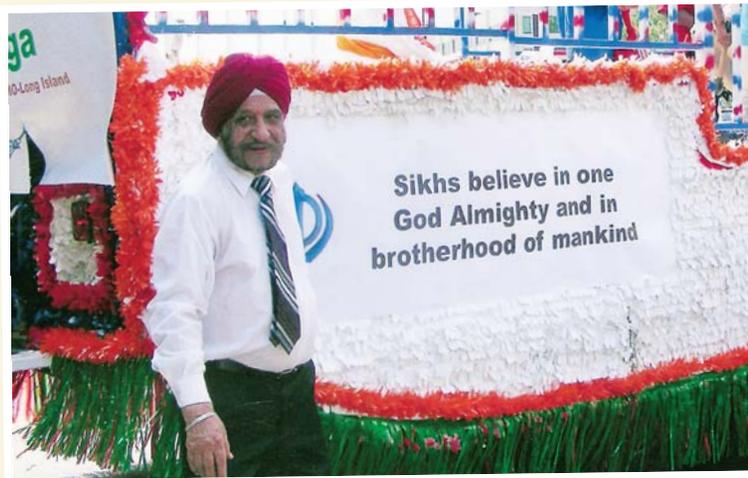
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# How I, an immigrant, brought real estate boom to 5 boroughs of NYC

People tell me that I have left a legacy with my social, religious and cultural contributions. As for myself, I believe that my own success story with impeccable record will be inspiring to the coming generations of Indian Americans. Entering the real estate market in 1980, my acumen and foresight made me millions in lucrative deals, including some memorable case studies for history books.

In addition, the Bagga name and the Sikh Khanda symbol emblazoned on all my buildings and plazas promoted the Indian and Sikh community, pushing me to strive for excellence in my work. Incidentally, I was the first Indian or Sikh American to do it. Sant Chatwal's hotels bearing his name came much later. A newspaper editor asked me why. I said, "Donald Trump is my mentor and model. If he can put his name to his buildings, why can't I?" People also tried to dissuade me from displaying the Sikh symbol at my Bagga Plaza I in the posh Syosset-Woodbury area. What if the symbol (with some similarity to the Iranian symbol) annoys your big ticket tenants Marshalls or Home Goods and they run away, they asked? I had the courage of my convictions and nothing untoward happened.

I am most proud of Bagga Tower, of course. In 1986 I bought a single story shopping center in Rego Park, NY, at a stiff price and ending up adding 9 stories on top with residential condos. The building was inaugurated in 1999 in the Khalsa tercentennial anniversary. No big deal, you would say. But wait. What I also accomplished in the process is successfully spon-



After the Wisconsin gurdwara tragedy, Mr Bagga sponsored the Punjab State float at the Indian Day parade in Hicksville in August 2012 to educate the public on the 100-year history and contributions of Sikhs in America. Punjabis and Sikhs were pioneers to start Gadar party in America in 1913 to liberate India.

By Darshan Singh Bagga

sored – through the good offices of then Mayor Rudy Giuliani -- an amendment to NYC tax abatement law which will become applicable to building above an existing structure. This amendment led to a building boom from 1998 onward in New York City. Manhattan with stricter zoning laws got the biggest benefit.

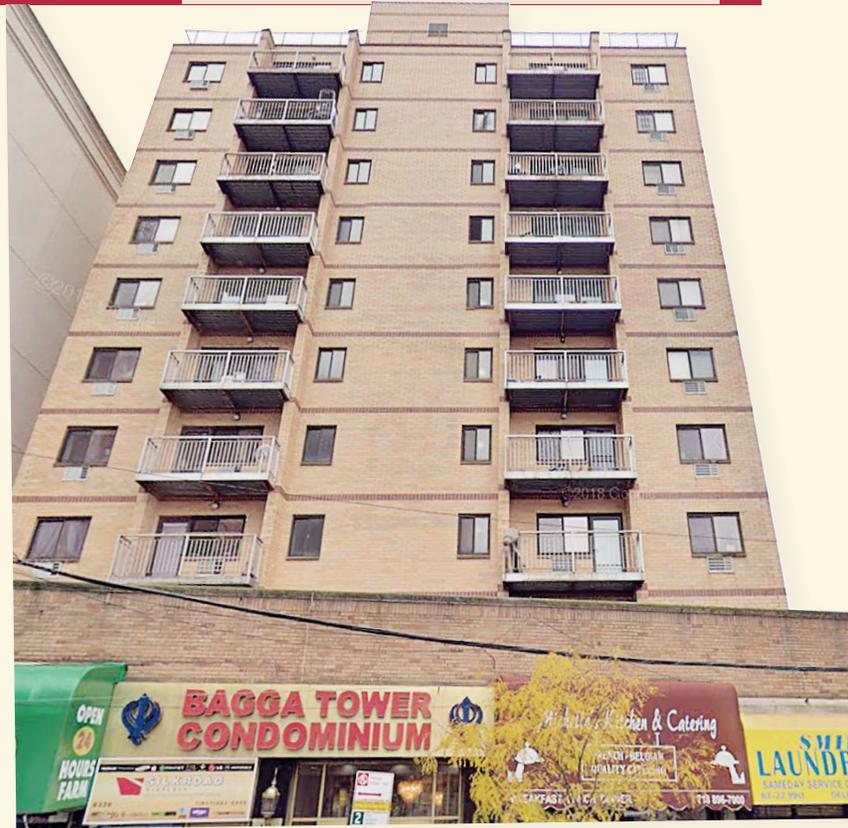
All this and the achievements of many Indian Americans of my generation has laid a foundation on which has grown the influence of the Indian community in Nassau County to the same level as Jews in America. Today politicians of all stripes in the country look to Indian community's support to succeed. In due course, our own people are entering politics and winning elected office from Town to County to National levels.

My unwavering faith in my religion and retaining Sikhi saroop has played a big role in my success, of course. Guru

Granth Sahib, our holy scripture, provides direction in every aspect of life, from understanding of God to making positive changes in life and combating negative attitudes. Our mantra is: chardi kala, by which we aspire to maintain a mental state of eternal opti-



Darshan Singh Bagga, accompanied by wife Lovlin, receiving the Punjab Rattan Award at World Punjabi Organization international convention in New York in 2006 from actor and Indian MP, Raj Babbar.



The fairy tale success story of Darshan Singh Bagga as visionary investor-builder started with this building. He bought a single story shopping center in Rego Park, NY, and added 9 stories on top. Not only were his construction methods unusual and innovative, he sought and secured change in the tax abatement law that triggered a building boom in the city, particularly Manhattan.

## Seeking due recognition for Gadarites

The Gadar party leaders were the first freedom fighters, waging the war from US soil to liberate India from the British. They sacrificed their all; some laid down their lives. Kartar Singh Sarabha kissed the gallows when he was just 19. The Gadarites deserve better recognition in histo-

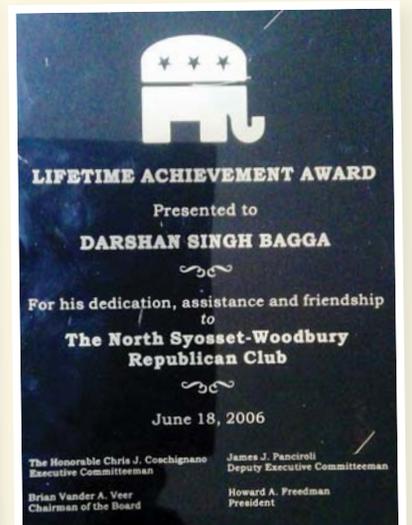
ry books along with the pantheon of Gandhi, Nehru and Patel and revolutionaries like Bhagat Singh, and due remembrance at national days and such occasions. I beseech Indian External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj, who also has the charge of NRI affairs, to not let the saga of Gadarites remain unforgotten any longer.



Kartar Singh Sarabha (1896-1915)

mism and joy. Sikhism teaches us to live honestly by working hard and helping the needy people irrespective of caste and creed. Guru Nanak taught us that all humans are equal and children of the same God. Women's equality and rights

were acknowledged in my religion much before the women's liberation movement of the 20th century. The other uniqueness of Sikh religion is the supreme sacrifice its gurus made for other religions and for the cause of justice.



Darshan Singh Bagga was given the Lifetime Achievement Award in 2006 by the North Syosset-Woodbury Republican Club.

# Religion and Public Schools

As students and teachers start a new school year, many of them—and many parents—have questions about how educators should deal with religion and religious differences. The First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution prohibits government from favoring one religion over another (or belief over non-belief) or preventing people from freely practicing their faith. What does this mean for public schools?

To begin with, students must be allowed to make up examinations and not be penalized if they are absent for religious reasons and make reasonable efforts to accommodate varied worship schedules. In practice, this has meant that when many children or teachers will be observing a holy day, school usually is cancelled. In New York and many other states, for example, there generally are no classes on major Jewish and Christian holidays. Two years ago, the Syosset school board voted unanimously to add Diwali (the “Festival of Lights” celebrated by Hindus, Jains, Sikhs, and Brahma Kumaris), Eid al-Fitr (the feast ending Islam’s holy month of Ramadan), and Eid al-Adha (the Muslims’ Feast of the Sacrifice) to Christmas, Yom Kippur and the Lunar New Year on the list.

If you practice the Baha’i Faith, there is probably not a district anywhere in America where there are enough Baha’i students or staff for school to be cancelled on Baha’u’llah’s birthday, but educators must make a reasonable effort to allow children to observe the holiday without being penalized. And since there are Baha’is in nearly every part of the nation, it would be wise for them to acknowledge the holiday in some way.

Educators should also be aware that not everyone within any given faith community follows exactly the same calendar. The length of Jewish holidays varies from Reform to Orthodox Judaism. Orthodox Christians often celebrate Good Friday and Easter at a different time than do Catholics and Protestants—and the Old Calendar Orthodox follow yet another schedule. Nearly every year, a Greek Orthodox priest told me, at least one teacher accuses one of his kids of lying when he says he will miss school next week on Good Friday, often angrily chastised, “Don’t give me that! Good Friday was two weeks ago!” The kid may not be lying. The teacher may just be ignorant.

Students and parents likewise have every right to ask public schools to make reasonable efforts to accommodate the religious practices of children. Does your faith encourage modest attire? If so, you can insist that they be allowed to wear appropriate clothes to gym class. Are students required to spend lunch in the cafeteria? This seems a bit cruel if they are fasting for Ramadan or Yom Kippur, so you can

ask that they be allowed to gather elsewhere. Do you object to how your child’s teacher handles Halloween, evolution, or sex education? You can demand that he or she be excused from that lesson. Schools also must be even-handed toward different faiths. If students are allowed to form a chess club, they also have the right to form a Bible Club. Or a Talmudic Study Group. Or a Quran Club.

A survey by the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life helps explain why we keep having arguments in this nation about religion in public schools. 89% of Americans know that public school teachers cannot lead their classes in prayer, but only about a third know that teachers may read from the Bible in a literature or history class or offer courses on comparative religion. Indeed, when the Supreme Court ruled that state legislators could not tell students how to pray—and I agree with the Court on this—it urged schools to teach about religion.

Some districts and administrators have been so afraid of offending anyone that they have ordered teachers to avoid religious topics altogether. This means, unfortunately, that they have watered down the curriculum in ways guaranteed to offend nearly everyone. Albert Shankar, the former president of the American Federation of Teachers, found text books that—and I am not

By Thomas W. Goodhue

between teaching about religion in public schools and religious indoctrination:

1. The school’s approach to religion is academic, not devotional.
2. The school may strive for student awareness of religions, but should not press for student acceptance of any one religion.
3. The school may sponsor study about religion, but may not sponsor the practice of religion.
4. The school may expose students to diverse religious views, but may not impose any particular view.
5. The school may educate about all religions, but may not promote or denigrate any religion.
6. The school may inform the student about various beliefs, but should not seek to conform him or her to any particular belief.”

Some subjects may clash with religious sensibilities. My own high school biology teacher never said a word about evolution, probably certain that anything he said would cause a ruckus. His cowardice did his students a disservice, leaving us ignorant of the single most



**The First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution prohibits government from favoring one religion over another (or belief over non-belief) or preventing people from freely practicing their faith. What does this mean for public schools?**

ed many of these yet.

“Religion in the Public School Curriculum,” notes that In *Edwards v. Aguillard*, the U.S. Supreme Court stated that, “teaching a variety of scientific theories about the origins of humankind to schoolchildren might be validly done with the clear secular intent of enhancing the effectiveness of science instruction. Though science instruction may not endorse or promote religious doctrine, the account of creation found in various scriptures may be discussed in a religious studies class or in any course that considers religious explanations for the origin of life.”

This approach is both good science and good teaching. Dr. Farouque Khan says that when science seems to contradict the Qu’ran, Muslims are supposed to keep studying the Qu’ran and keep pursuing science until they discover whether it was Scripture or science that they have misunderstood. Christians should do no less.

When it comes to religion, and many other things in life, we all have a lot to learn about one another. I know I do.

**Students and parents have every right to ask public schools to make reasonable efforts to accommodate the**



**religious practices of children. For example, two years ago, the Syosset school board added Diwali, Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha to Christmas, Yom Kippur and Lunar New Year on the holidays list.**

making this up—defined the Pilgrims as “people who made long trips” and Christmas as a “warm time for special foods.” As Stephen Prothero observed, “This muzzling of religion is not only unfair, it is likely unconstitutional.” [Religious Literacy: What Every American Needs To Know—and Doesn’t. New York: Harper One, 2009, pp. 50-53.] “Religion in the Public School Curriculum,” a set of guidelines issued by 17 religious and educational organizations, summarizes the distinction this way:

**What is meant by “teaching about religion” in the public schools?**

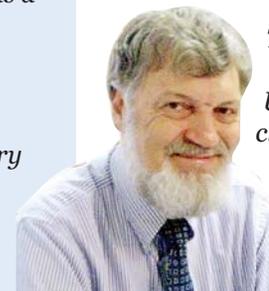
The following statements distinguish

influential theory in the life sciences, whether or not we would end up accepting or doubting it, and depriving skeptics of a chance to hone their arguments. When it comes to teaching biology, public schools should teach:

- ▶ what a scientific theory is and is not,
- ▶ why the life sciences are all based on evolutionary theory,
- ▶ why evolution was and remains a shocking concept to many people,
- ▶ current controversies such as incremental change vs. punctuated equilibrium, and
- ▶ current critiques of evolutionary theory, including any scientific challenges that proponents of Intelligent Design have developed, though they have not yet formulat-

**Excerpted from Many Names for God:**

**How To Be a Good Neighbor in a Multi-Faith World**



Thomas W. Goodhue is a United Methodist clergyman who led the Long Island Council of Churches for 17 years.

# Islam teaches One Humanity One Creation One Creator

The Holy Quran, Chapter 49, Verse 13 reads: "O mankind! We created you from a single pair of male and female. And, made you into nations and tribes that you may get to know one another (Not despise one another). Surely the noblest of you in the sight of God is the one who is the most righteous."

Too often people of a nation or religious group are content in staying narrowly focused; they see their religion as the best and only religion that matters; they get very little exposure to people of other cultures and religions. This narrow focus can lead people to think that their thinking and lives are very different from other people around the world.

Different religions call God by different names: They may call God Allah, Jehovah, Yahweh, etc. These are only words to give a name to "The Mystery". The human being is reflective and speculative; the human being does not only want to understand what they experience in everyday life with their senses: They want to understand the unseen mysteries of life. The human being reflects on the questions: "What created me and all that I see? Where did I come from? Where am I going when I die?"

Prophet Mohammed (Peace be upon him) came with the message that you can't totally identify "God". However, the functioning of creation and what you see in everyday reality points to God's existence. Though you can't see God, you should show God respect by living the best life possible and by having love and concern for all creation.

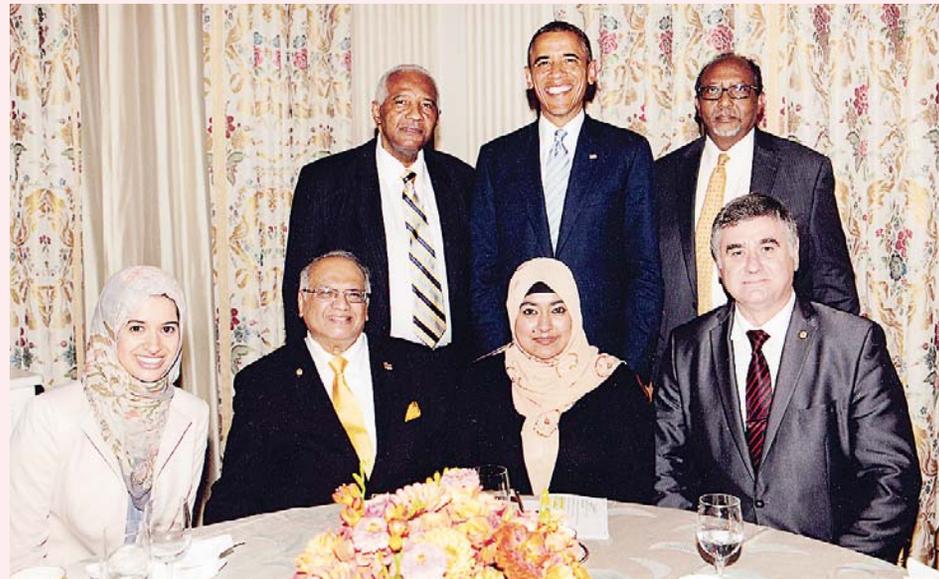
Each one of us has a short time on this earth. Life is consistent; all who are born will die, regardless of wealth, regardless of race, regardless of religion. Most people die while doing something else; even in their last moments of life they're not sure they're experiencing death. Why waste time debating about which human being received the greatest truth/narrative about life and its mysteries. I believe no narrative explains it all – that's Life.

The Prophets and the People of God are sent to us as reminders of the better nature that is within us all; the voice from within that speaks to us through what we call our conscience. After these Prophets and People of God die, we establish religious theologies and religious schools of thought based on the simple message they brought. Our

By *Khalid S. Lateef*

Creator sends us Servants as a reminder of the better nature that has been put inside of us all.

The truth is, human beings have more similarities than differences. We have similar motivations: We all strive to obtain food, clothing and shelter for our survival. We all want our family members to get a good education and to be safe from harm. We all have the same emotions: We feel fear, anger, happiness, compassion, and love. We all cry, smile and laugh in the same lan-



In 2014, President Barack Obama invited Mr Lateef to the White House Iftar Dinner.

guage. Most of our "differences" are created and maintained through our "thinking"; in our mental perception of other Races, Cultures and Religions.

The most important foundation for having a peaceful world and positive growth for all humanity is in the spirit and thinking of our leaders. It is not the physical attributes of our leaders that is important; it is not their height, weight, or color that will determine the type of world we will have in the future. It is in our leaders' spirit and thinking that will determine the kind of world our children, grand children and great grand children will inherit. We have the opportunity to begin the process that will bring into being for the first time in history a world of protected peace and safety for all, the word in Arabic to describe this state is "Islam"; not Islam as a religious theology, but Islam as a state of being....

The Holy Quran, Chapter 4, Verse 135 reads: "O ye who believe! Stand out firmly for justice, as witnesses to God,

Prophet Mohammed came with the message that you can't totally identify "God". However, the functioning of creation and what you see in everyday reality points to God's existence. Though you can't see God, you should show God respect by living the best life possible and by having love and concern for all creation.



even as against yourselves, or your parents, or your kin, and whether it be (against) rich or poor; for God can best protect both. Follow not the lusts (of your hearts) lest ye swerve, and if ye distort (justice) or decline to do justice, verily God is well-acquainted with all that ye do." The United States of

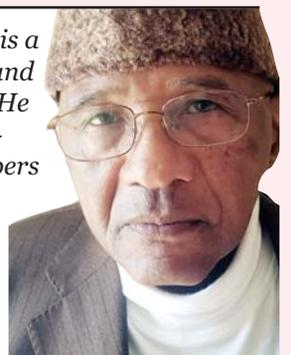
ing, and prayer? It is keeping peace and good relations between people, because quarrels and bad feelings destroy mankind."

In my lifetime, I've been hurt by people of my Race and other Races. On the quest to improve my life, I have been helped by people of all races and religions. The simple "truth" is that the doing of good or bad is not restricted to any one people; the potential for good or bad is within all human beings. My life was "transformed": I went from being racially focused to having a "universal" outlook; from seeing people that were not Black as different or the "enemy" to seeing all people as belonging to one race – the Human Race. It has taken a lifetime, but this is what I've learned.

*Khalid S. Lateef is a Writer, Author and Public Speaker. He has written articles for newspapers that have a National & International distribution, such as the Amsterdam News, Jewish World and the Muslim Journal.*

*In 1980, he founded the American Muslim Mission Center, now named Siraatul-Mustaqeem Islamic Center of Wyandanch, Long Island. He served as its Imam until 1994. He serves on numerous boards of organizations that have Multi-Faith education and activities as their focus. In 2009 he authored the book "To Be Human; Life Changing Insights from Around the World" that utilizes quotes from around the world to support the idea of One World, One Humanity and One Creator.*

*Khalid S. Lateef has decided to dedicate the rest of his life to establishing better relations between people of different races, cultures and religions.*



From September 6-24 Jains all over the world celebrated their annual holy festivals of Paryushan and Das Lakshan. We conclude with asking forgiveness from others for offenses committed during the year gone by: "If I have caused you offence in any way, knowingly or unknowingly, in thought, word or deed, then I seek your forgiveness".

Forgiveness is the intentional and voluntary process through which we can undergo a change in feelings and attitude regarding an offense and let go of negative emotions such as revenge, with an increased ability to wish the offender well.

As a psychological concept and virtue, the benefits of forgiveness have been explored in religious thought, in the social sciences and medicine. In most contexts, forgiveness is granted without any expectation of restorative justice, and without any response on the part of the offender (for example, one may forgive a person who is incomunicado or dead). In practical terms, it may be necessary for the offender to offer some form of an apology, or even just ask for forgiveness.

Most world religions include teachings on the nature of forgiveness. Some place greater emphasis on the need for humans to find some sort of divine forgiveness for their own shortcomings, others emphasize the need to practice forgiveness of one another, yet others make little or no distinction between human and divine forgiveness.

### In Jainism

In Jainism, forgiveness is a key virtue. Kṣamāpanā or supreme forgiveness forms part of one of the 10 characteristics of dharma. In the Jain prayer of Pratikramana, Jains repeatedly seek forgiveness from various creatures, even plants and micro-organisms that they may have harmed while eating and doing routine activities. On the last day of the Jain festival of Paryushan, forgiveness is asked by saying, Micchāmi dukkaḍaṃ, a Prakrit language phrase literally meaning "may all the evil that has been done be fruitless." No private quarrel or dispute may be carried beyond this day. Phone calls are made to the outstation friends and relatives asking their forgiveness.

### In Judaism

In Judaism, if a person causes harm, but then sincerely and honestly apologizes to the wronged individual and tries to rectify the wrong, the wronged individual is required to grant forgiveness.

One who sincerely apologizes three times for a wrong committed against another has fulfilled his or her obligation to seek forgiveness. This means that in Judaism a person cannot obtain forgiveness from God for wrongs the

# Why forgive and seek forgiveness

By Dr. Sulekh C. Jain

person has done to other people. This also means that unless the victim forgave the perpetrator before he died (murder is unforgivable in Judaism), and they will answer to God for it, the victim's family and friends can forgive the murderer for the grief they caused them.

Sir Jonathan Sacks, Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth, explained: "It is not that God forgives, while human beings do not. To the contrary, we



***In Jainism, seeking forgiveness is formally embedded in a festival. But it is not exclusive to it. Didn't Jesus say, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do"?***

believe that just as only God can forgive sins against God, so only human beings can forgive sins against human beings."

Jews observe a Day of Atonement - Yom Kippur. Just prior to it, they will ask forgiveness of those they have wronged during the prior year. During Yom Kippur itself, Jews fast and pray for God's forgiveness for the transgressions they have made against God in the prior year. Sincere repentance is required, and once again, God can only forgive one for the sins one has committed against God; this is why it is necessary for Jews also to seek the forgiveness of those people who they have wronged.

### In Christianity

Peter came to Jesus and said, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?" Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times."

Jesus asked for God's forgiveness of those who crucified him. "And Jesus said, 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.'"

Christian prayer says, "For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins." Forgiveness is not an option to a Christian; rather one must forgive to be a Christian.

### In Islam

The Quran makes it clear that whenever possible it is better to forgive another than to attack another. The Quran describes the believers (Muslims) as those who, avoid gross sins and vice, and when angered they forgive, and says that although the just requital for an injustice is an equivalent retribution, those who pardon and maintain righteousness are rewarded by GOD. He does not love the unjust.

One example of Muhammad's practice of forgiveness can be found in the Hadith:

The Prophet was the most forgiving person. He was ever ready to forgive his enemies. When he went to Ta'if to preach the message of Allah, its people mistreated him, abused him and hit him with stones. He left the city humiliated and wounded. When he took shelter under a tree, the angel of Allah visited him and told him that Allah sent him to destroy the people of Ta'if because of their sin of maltreating their Prophet. Muhammad prayed to Allah to save the people of Ta'if, because what they did was out of their ignorance.

### In Buddhism

In Buddhism, forgiveness is seen as a practice to prevent harmful thoughts from causing havoc on one's mental well-being. Instead, it encourages the cultivation of thoughts

that leave a wholesome effect. "In contemplating the law of karma, we realize that it is not a matter of seeking revenge but of practicing Mettā and forgiveness for the victimizer, the most unfortunate of all." When resentments have already arisen, the Buddhist view is to calmly proceed to release them by going back to their roots. If we haven't forgiven, we keep creating an identity around our pain, and that is what is reborn.

As Dhammapada puts it,

"He abused me, he struck me, he overcame me, he robbed me' — in those who harbor such thoughts hatred will never cease."

"He abused me, he struck me, he overcame me, he robbed me' — in those who do not harbor such thoughts hatred will cease."

### In Hinduism

The theological basis for forgiveness in Hinduism is that a person who does not forgive carries a baggage of memories of the wrong, of negative feelings, of anger and unresolved emotions that affect his or her present as well as future. Forgiveness is to be sought from the individual wronged, as well as society at large, by acts of charity, purification, fasting, rituals and meditative introspection.

### In popular parlance

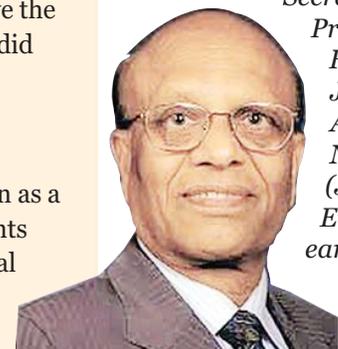
The need to forgive is widely recognized by the public, but they are often at a loss for ways to accomplish it. In a 1988 study, Gallup found that 94% people said it was important to forgive, but 85% said they needed some outside help to be able to forgive.

If not forgiveness, the next best is mercy. The Gallup poll revealed that "meditative prayer" also works.

Forgiveness as a tool has been extensively used in restorative justice programs: after the abolition of apartheid, Truth and Reconciliation Commission (South Africa), and the Northern Ireland conflict, also documented in film, Beyond Right and Wrong: Stories of Justice and Forgiveness (2012).

*Compiled from several sources including Wikipedia.*

*Dr. Sulekh C. Jain is the Past Secretary and President of the Federation of Jain Associations in North America (JAINA). Email; scjain@earthlink.net*



# The Big Questions of Life as answered by Hinduism

God is everywhere, God is one, God is omnipresent, beyond origin and end. God is the one who is behind all this creation. How He creates, how the world came into existence, what is the role of a human being? What is the meaning of evolving, what is the essence of being a human?

How should we relate to each other and what should be our relationship with other species, how should we connect with other elements of nature around us?

Hinduism is a flow of ancient body of evolving knowledge rooted in inspiration and contemplation. Rishis have attempted to reveal the secrets of creator with humility. They tirelessly, reverentially and passionately worked towards unveiling the ideal structure to resonate with the cosmic force. They experimented through rigorous practices and determined the efficacy of certain rules, which are presented as standard for uplifting life and to realize the optimum level of happiness possible for a human being.

They were convinced that the 'extent of limitless joy or bliss' that is attainable by a human being has a lot to do with harmonizing the inner environment of human mind to the Cosmic Being/God.

God is infinite and there could be infinite ways to reach Him. We eulogize the importance of surrendering to Him. Here Him and Her are interchangeable -- we are trying to talk about that which is beyond gender, beyond form, beyond the rules of time and causation. That is why HE/SHE is ever free. Freedom can be given by the one who is free. We can't even fathom the meaning of liberation within the routine walls of our day-to-day experience if we lead a life that lacks awareness of the absolute.

We are indebted to the rich spiritual cultural heritage as Hindus which has given enlightening guidance towards the ultimate achievable and worthy goal of life. They didn't stop at showing just the goal, but also gave ways to reach there, and offered this with so much understanding of the human mind that there is a variety to suit each individual to attain the infinite in his/her unique and distinct way.

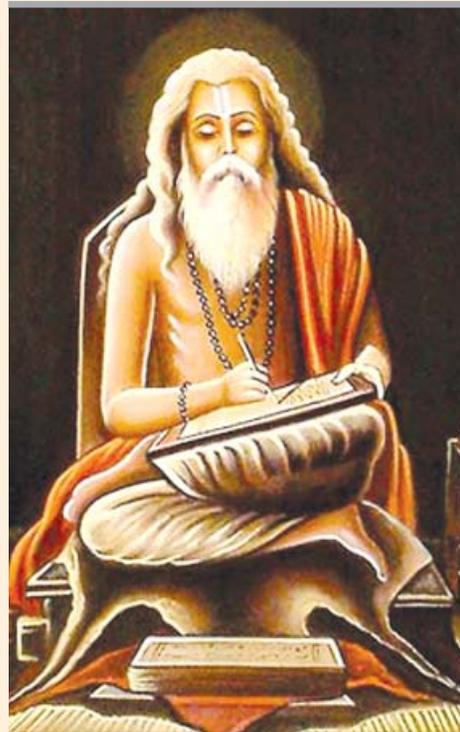
Let us further simplify. When we are told 'accept yourself as you are' by the gurus, they are asking as to be true to ourselves. Bring this idea to the practical world. We say, 'Honesty is the best policy'.

Why? In order to appreciate this principle, it is necessary to take the spiritual dimension of human beings

By Ashok Vyas

into account, otherwise on a mundane level, many times we see dishonest people seem to be winning.

We need to look at who we are in the totality of our existence. If we are lazy, we will not touch the depth given to us by the creator.



Hinduism offers tools to attain 'that' which is within. That is why there is so much emphasis on 'knowledge'. Karma or good deeds is not going to liberate, knowledge will. When Adi Shankara proposes and emphasizes this, it is the knowledge of 'Brahman'.

Let us consider the two words, 'Brahman' and 'Dharma'. Saints have again and again clarified that 'Brahman is to know' and 'Dharma is to follow'. Practicing Dharma is living truthfully. That enables us to evolve and appreciate Brahman. We resonate with the loving joy as we become aware of participating creatively in the divine play.

Love and creativity and worship -- all are synonymous words on some level. In love, surrender happens inevitably without even realizing it. In creativity, when one is lost, that subtle consciousness takes over, works through us, making us a medium of its expression.

The goal of human life is to become a medium of the Divine. That is why we say, do God's work. This God is a continuity of that energy, which is eternal, which is not confined to the 'duration of our body' as it exists with an identity and expresses itself in alignment with its unique characteristics. Here again, the idea of surrendering to the absolute with awareness

of being one with it is what we call as 'Worship'.

Hinduism believes in openness regarding designing one's own Sadhana or daily practices. The guiding light comes from the Vedas, which are considered 'A-Paurushey' (Not made by man). So this revelation sustains the glory of human being in an impeccable manner and offers a

***The rich spiritual-cultural heritage of Hindus has given enlightening guidance towards the ultimate achievable and worthy goal of life. They didn't stop at showing just the goal, but also detailed ways to reach there, offering systems such as in yoga with so much understanding of the human mind that there is a variety to suit each individual to attain the infinite in his/her unique and distinct way.***

vision of vastness.

Many Hindus these days are not excited about practicing it because we stifled the spirit of questioning and seeking answers in a soulful manner. We became dependent on the technology to shape our lives. So, when Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudev talks about 'Inner Engineering', he is repositioning the spirit of the Upanishads and inviting practitioners to a space where they would respect their originality. When Sri Sri Ravi Shankar names his organization as 'Art of Living', he has simplified and beautifully energized the word towards the focus on breath with creative insight.

Hinduism is not particularly concerned in its core about conversion or about showing its supremacy. It is assured of its role being relevant for the whole humanity. None of the Hindu scriptures have the term 'Hindu', indeed it is meant for the whole humanity. When a Yoga practitioner in Boston or Bahrain connects with his/her inner joy, it is pure, it needs no label.

Hindu inspiration and its universality is epitomized in this thought, 'AMANTRAMKHSARAM NASTI NASTIMOOLMANAUSHADHAM AYOGYAH PURUSHO NASTI YOJGASTATRA DURLABHAH'.

Which reads in translation: "There is no single letter of the

alphabet that cannot be used as a mantra, no bit of vegetation that does not contain a medicinal cure for a disease: even so, there is no human being who is fit for nothing."

This sense of conviction in the goodness of every human being is an antidote to depression and empowers everyone beyond divisions.

Dharma is that practice which leads to the ultimate, the Gita asserts. "That which is the source of the life-steams of all beings. That by which the world is permeated, by Worshipping That with his actions man attains to the ultimate fulfillment.

(Shloka 46th of 18th Chapter)

The flow of knowledge occurs when consciousness contacts consciousness. When we pay more importance to mechanical aspect of life, the soulful aspect of our being takes a back seat.

Hinduism is all about soulful living; when that happens, reverence sprouts and blossoms, paving the way for love and compassion. The presence of a Guru in one's life to learn about life and celebrate it is always recognized and appreciated in Hindu traditions. The mother is also acknowledged as the first guru of a child. It is the guidance, instructions and inspiration from Guru on the path of spiritual evolution that is helpful in attaining clarity of vision.

Swami Shri Ishwarananda Giriji Maharaj has expressed it beautifully in the book 'Seven Days in Samvit', when he says, "God becomes the Guru when you seek Light and surrender to His Grace. Human birth is an invitation for enlightenment. Harken to this call."

When we read the sayings of Great Masters we open our mind to their inspirations. Their compassion has the power to lift our level of consciousness. Pray intensely: 'Lead me from darkness to light!'

*Ashok Vyas is a disciple of Swami Shri Ishwarananda Giriji Maharaj. He works with Creative Hindu Alliance to highlight core Hindu values with multiple creative tools. A well-known poet, Hindu priest and program director with ITVGOLD, New*

*York, he is also co-founder of 'Insight for Creativity LLC' which has produced several cultural-religious programs. Contact: Insight4creativity@gmail.com*



# 13 Life Lessons from King David

## 1. Never judge by appearances

Our first lesson comes not from David, but from God Himself. God dispatched the prophet Samuel to Jesse's house to anoint one of his sons future king of Israel. One by one, Samuel was shown all of Jesse's older sons, but none were "the one." Little David, out tending the sheep, was not present. Said God to Samuel: "Look not upon his appearance, or the height of his stature ... the Lord sees into the heart." Smallest and least likely of them all, it was David who held the potential to lead Israel to greatness.

## 2. It can be done



*David was on God's side, so he was able to kill Goliath.*

David was catapulted to fame and acclaim after he killed Goliath, the Philistine giant before whom the entire Israelite camp cowered, with a mere slingshot and five smooth stones. Even King Saul tried to dissuade David, claiming that he was too young to take on such a seasoned warrior. In David's own words to Goliath: "You come to me with a sword, spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of God Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied."

## 3. Think outside the box

When King Saul became jealous of David's success, he was forced to flee to the land of the Philistines, enemies of Israel. Knowing his reputation as a hero made him widely recognized, David "changed his speech before their eyes and feigned insanity before them. And he scribbled on the doors of the gate, and let his saliva run down upon his beard."

David's quick thinking caused the Philistines to disregard him, and his life was

spared. In life, there is always a solution, but it may not be the obvious one.

## 4. Be emotional

Throughout his life, David expressed his emotion through song and/or weeping. Even though he was a celebrated warrior, David was not ashamed to show his humanity. Like David, we must give expression to our feelings, never feeling too "manly" for a good cry.

## 5. Take the high road

King Saul pursued David through the desert, desperate to find and kill him. Once, when Saul relieved himself in the very cave where David was hiding, David's cohorts encouraged him to finally kill Saul. But David merely cut off a small piece of Saul's robe, indicating that he could have killed his pursuer but chose not to because he revered Saul as the king chosen by God.

Like David, we too can take the high road. We may lose the battle, but we win the war of morality.

## 6. Keep your enemies closer

Abner was Saul's right-hand man, and instead of supporting his son, Ish Bosheth, after Saul fell in battle, he continued to fight against David. Nevertheless, when Abner later decided to leave Ish and support David, David accepted him unquestioningly. Indeed Abner was in the process of drumming up support for David when he was killed by Yoav, David's suspicious and vengeful general.

Despite Yoav's continued displeasure, David is warm and welcoming to all, even those who have done him harm. Do you have rival at work, in school? Welcome them into your circle of friends with honest acceptance.

## 7. Never forget about God

When David was finally firmly ensconced on his throne in Jerusalem, he was not content with his own comfort and sought to build a Temple for God. Ultimately, he was told that he would not be the one to build God's home in Jerusalem (that would be the job of his son), but it wasn't for lack of goodwill on his part.

*By Menachem Posner/Chabad.org*



**Fearless warrior, passionate family man, loyal follower of God, King David (described in the Hebrew Bible as the second king of the United Kingdom of Israel and Judah) lived a tumultuous and triumphant**

**life. He was the progenitor of a royal dynasty chosen by God, but he suffered mightily from strife, especially at the hand of those closest to him.**

***Here are 13 lessons from King David's life we can all live by:***

## 8. Worry not what others may think

When David brought the Holy Ark to Jerusalem, he "danced with all his might before the Lord." Queen Michal, daughter of King Saul, found it distasteful for a king to display such emotion in public. When she criticized him for allowing even simple folk to see him in such a state, David explained his actions by saying that God had chosen him to become king over Israel. Even if he were to "demean" himself further, he said, he was confident that the onlookers would honor him.

When we push aside our concern over public opinion to serve God in the way we know to be correct, people respect us for our strength of conviction.

## 9. Accept rebuke

After David acted improperly with Bathsheba (and had her husband, Uriah, killed), Nathan told David about a rich man who stole a poor man's sheep as a way of demonstrating how wrong the king had been to take Bathsheba from her husband. The king humbly accepted the prophet's criticism and admitted that he had sinned.

Like David, we must recognize when we mess up, ask for forgiveness, and try to do better.

## 10. Don't try to undo the past

As predicted by the Prophet Nathan, the first child of David and Bathsheba fell mortally ill.

David prayed to God, fasted, and slept on the ground during the child's illness. When the child died a week later, however, David was remarkably calm. In response to his servants' curiosity, David explained: "While the child was yet alive, I fasted and wept, for I said, 'Who knows? Perhaps the Lord will be gracious to me, and the child will live. But now that he is dead, why should I fast? Can I bring him back again?'"

David knew that his child was gone forever and chose to focus on comforting his wife. There is a time for prayer, a time for mourning, and a time to resume living.

## 11. Use your resources wisely

While camped outside of Jerusalem, fearing attack from his son, Absalom, David was joined by loyal friends and followers. Among them was the old and wise Chushai. Recognizing that Chushai was of little use in a guerrilla camp, David dispatched him to Jerusalem where he could infiltrate, posed as a supporter of Absalom. Indeed, in more than one instance, Chushai's inside knowledge and wisdom saved the day.

Blood runs thicker than water, and friendship is even deeper than blood. Treasure your friends, and treat them with loyalty and devotion.

## 12. Seek out compromise

While David was away from Jerusalem, Mephibosheth's

servant, Ziba, slandered his master, telling David that Mephibosheth was hoping to become king over Israel. David decreed that Mephibosheth's wealth (much of it, a gift from David) be given to Ziba, but when the war ended it became apparent that Mephibosheth had remained loyal to David. Faced with the choice of retracting his word or depriving Mephibosheth of all he owned, David decided that the wealth he had awarded Ziba would now be split evenly between the two men.

David's split-second decision allowed both men to save face and retain enough to live off. Sometimes, a compromise is the best solution when faced with two imperfect alternatives.

## 13. It's never too late

Throughout his career, David suffered from the ill-temper and vengefulness of his captain Yoav. Despite his best attempts, David was never able to rid himself of Yoav. On his deathbed, giving final instructions to Solomon, his son and successor, David asked him to make sure that Yoav would ultimately be punished for his numerous acts of treachery.

Like David, we cannot accomplish everything. Do what you can, ask others to pitch in, and let God put the pieces together. In the words of the sages, "It is not your [task] to finish the work, but neither are you free to be absolved from it."

*Courtesy Chabad.org*

Within all hearts,  
Ram [God] speaks, Ram speaks.  
Who else speaks, other than  
Ram?  
Out of the same clay, the ele-  
phant, the ant, and many sorts  
of species are formed.  
(Namdev in Guru Granth  
Sahib)

It was an honor to be Mr. Darshan Singh Bagga's guest at the launch of the Global Interfaith Foundation and its journal One World Under God in July. It was also a distinct pleasure to hear the leaders from various faith traditions (Jewish, Jain, Hindu, Sikh, Islamic and Christian) give their perspectives on religious diversity. One of the core themes that emerged was how each tradition holds different narratives to express their understanding of the unity "behind" the diversity that we see in the world. Most traditions, even secular ones, seek that hidden unity behind the diversity, such that not only celestial divinity or compassion but human reason and human rights become symbols of the unifying core. Both religionists and secularists argue for equality, liberty, truth, justice, and universal brotherhood/sisterhood, such that their vocabularies often overlap: "One Nation under God," for example.

To speak about my own faith, Sikhism, its founder Guru Nanak's vision was pluriversal (rather than universal). Here, 'pluriversal' refers to the necessity of multiple grammars, vocabularies, concepts and languages, both secular and religious, to approach the Universal; as no one discipline, language, culture or people can capture in a singular grammar the One without the specter of hubris. As Guru Nanak wrote in the opening "recitation/reflection" of the Guru Granth Sahib:

If anyone presumes to describe God, he is to be known as the greatest fool among fools.

Thus, one has to move beyond the idea that truth can be stated literally, and for all time, towards a positive engagement with contradiction and different viewpoints, such that truth is expressed more poetically rather than as logical fact. Friedrich Nietzsche said, "We have art not to die of the truth". Guru Nanak, centuries before Nietzsche, said something similar, in his privileging of "truthful living over the truth". Having spent over two decades travelling across many boundaries, to learn multiple grammars and encounter dif-

# Sikhism presents a pluriversal vision

By Balbinder Singh Bhogal

ferent perspectives, Guru Nanak taught an inclusive vision through an enriched vocabulary that brought polarized traditions together. For example, he brought the renouncers out from the forests and caves into the world. Yogic renunciation became a mental not physical task. Later, Guru Hargobind and Guru Gobind

vision. Here, it is more important to feel the truth than to know it; the intellect's incisiveness must occur within the broader field of love's synthesis and compassion, jnana needs the context of bhakti – this inverts the West's vaunting of reason as absolute judge over emotion.

This article opened with the

**The Sikh Gurus employed Buddhist, Tantric, Islamic, Sufi, Vaisnava, Shaiva, Bhakti, Yogic, householder, familial, ascetic, regal, state, economic grammars, stitching them together in a magnificent and magnanimous text forming the Guru Granth Sahib.**

Singh made saints with rosaries focused on divine love enter the battlefield as warriors wielding swords for justice.

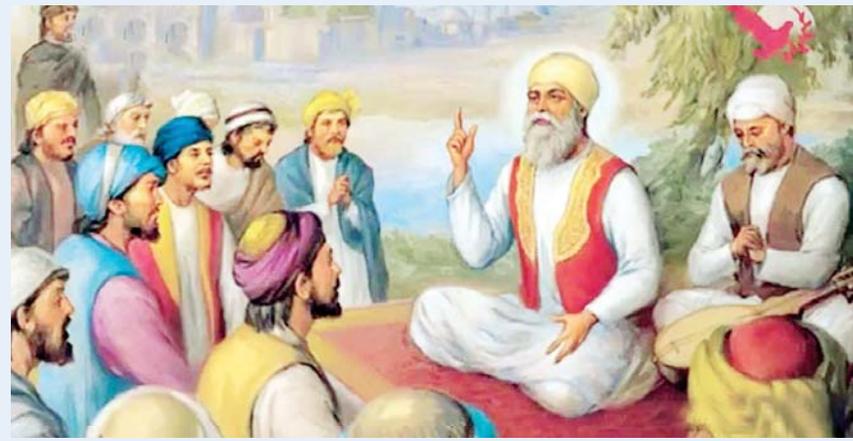
Thus, the Sikh Gurus employed Buddhist, Tantric, Islamic, Sufi, Vaisnava, Shaiva, Bhakti, Yogic, householder, familial, ascetic, regal, state, economic grammars, stitching them together in a magnificent and magnanimous text forming the Guru Granth Sahib. The poetic and musical symphony that Guru Arjan compiled and composed is without comparison for its interreligious foundation. The Gurus (critically but not dismissively) heard the voices of the other as a song echoing pluriversal values, forming them into a melody and music that could express the complexity of the truth as an art form, for all to resonate with, not an ideological truth to convert the other. Such an orchestration and gathering of voices did not demand a loss of their particularity, but quite the contrary: an inclusion towards a greater secular-religious

"Hindu" Maharashtrian poet-saint Bhagat Namdev who was a calico printer. Here, is an excerpt from a verse in the Guru Granth Sahib by the "Muslim" weaver and poet-saint Bhagat Kabir. Both were from the lower castes (though, the Guru Granth Sahib also has songs by Brahmins like Ramanand, Jaidev and many Bhatts/Bards):

*First, Allah created the Light; then, by His Power, He made all beings.*

*From the One Light, the entire universe welled up: so who is good, and who is bad? O people, O brother, do not wander deluded by doubt. The Creation is in the Creator, and the Creator is in the Creation, totally pervading and permeating all places.*

The Sikh Gurus' inclusion of the other's insights as resonant with a pluriversal largely arose from "The One" being understood and experienced as nondual and inclusive of time, the



**Having spent over two decades travelling across many boundaries, to learn multiple grammars and encounter different perspectives, Guru Nanak taught an inclusive vision through an enriched vocabulary that brought polarized traditions together.**

contingent – as we see in the above hymn: creator and creation are identified – though with qualification, "The Creation is in the Creator [as clay/matter] and the Creator is in the Creation [as light/spirit]". That is to say, there is no hard line between the One and the Many: "He is many, and He is One; He has made many colors; this is as He is, and shall be" (Guru Arjan). This nondual One cannot therefore be exclusively tied to any one people, land, culture, caste and so inherently rejects the notion of divine languages, special techniques, secret paths (accessed only by the elect), and there is no original sin ("there is nothing wrong with the pot of clay"). This is why someone like Kabir, who is free of the corruptions of the ego, sees the Unseen One everywhere, because he does not see it in only this particular thing or that particular thing. Allah, as the Light within all clay/beings, is also the inner knower and guide, which is incorruptible:

*You dwell in each and every heart as the Inner-Guide... There is only one breath; all are made of the same clay; the light within all is the same. The One Light pervades all; (though) every being is saturated by this Light it remains pristine.* (Guru Ram Das)

The qualification, however, relates to the ego and its actions that is where corruption occurs. Due to the false identification with our ego (haumai) we only see clay (the many), the One (Light) remains invisible to us. The ego's false identification with itself as the center of being leads to the judgment of good and bad, despite the fact that the nonduality of the One is constantly expressed in the refrain that "there is no other or second" (avaruna duujaa) to become attached to. We might think two things exist:

Creator and creation, us and them, good and bad, when in reality there is only the nondual One. Through images of light and clay, this point is made abundantly clear, confounding divisive judgment of any hierarchy.

The only marker of distinction is what you do with this clay: your deeds. Like Buddhism, Sikhism makes the shift from a philosophical metaphysics of Being to an existential and causal reality of Actions and their consequences. But unlike Buddhism (at least early Theravada Buddhism) God is also said to be the only Doer:

*The potter kneads the same clay, and colors the pots in many different ways. Into some, he sets the pearl of liberation, while to others, he attaches the malady (of bondage).* (Kabir)

The dual narrative (of human and divine agency) is constantly juxtaposed in the hymns seemingly producing a flat contradiction. But such a reading misses the temporal and existential frame of the Guru Granth Sahib as noted above. Through time something that is unripe can become ripe. It is one process not two separate states. Similarly, our actions (karam) come back to us as fate and as His grace (nadar) in one process.

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# Yogi Bhanjan

## Guru who married Sikhism with Yoga

Founded by Yogi Bhanjan, 3HO is a member of the United Nations as an NGO in Consultative Status (Roster) with the Economic and Social Council.

When he was just eight years old Harbhajan Singh Puri, to later become world famous as Yogi Bhanjan, began his yogic training with an enlightened teacher, Sant Hazara Singh, who proclaimed him to be a Master of Kundalini Yoga when he was just 16.

Born in 1929 in what is now Pakistan, he was the son of a physician. As a young boy he attended a Catholic convent school. During the turmoil of the partition in 1947, at the age of 18, he led his village of 7000 people near Lahore, to safety on foot in India. After graduating with a degree in Economics, he worked for the Indian government, going on head customs at New Delhi airport. He married Inderjit Kaur in 1952. They had two sons and a daughter.

All along he continued to teach yoga to people from all walks of life.

In 1968, he left India for Canada to teach yoga at Toronto University. Soon, he landed in Los Angeles, where he met a number of young hippies, the spiritual seekers of that era, and recognized that the experience of higher consciousness they were trying to find through drugs could be achieved by practicing Kundalini Yoga, while simultaneously rebuilding their nervous systems.

Breaking the centuries old secrecy surrounding Kundalini Yoga, he began teaching it publicly. With the yogic sciences of yoga, meditation, yogic philosophy, and loving acceptance, he gave the soon to be called "Baby Boomers" an effective alternative to the prevalent drug culture. In 1969, the non-profit 3HO Foundation (Healthy, Happy, Holy Organization) was incorporat-



As the Siri Singh Sahib, or leader of Sikhism in the Western Hemisphere, he met with Pope John Paul II in 1983 and 1984 to discuss inter-religious dialogue.

ed in California. Under his tutelage, 3HO soon grew worldwide to 300 centers in 35 countries. He also founded 3HO SuperHealth, a remarkably successful drugless, drug rehabilitation program.

In 1994 3HO became a member of the United Nations as an NGO in Consultative Status (Roster) with the Economic and Social Council.

Inspired and motivated by Yogi Bhanjan, students created music, art, and poetry reflecting the universal wisdom he shared. Over 200 books have been written based on his teachings, as well as a wealth of CD's, videos, paintings, and sculpture. He himself wrote over 30 books including The Yogi Bhanjan Library of Teachings, Furmaan Khalsa, Masters Touch, and Mind and Its 81 Facets.

To perpetuate his teachings, New

Mexico based International Kundalini Yoga Teachers Association and KRI (Kundalini Research Institute) now hold teacher-training courses throughout the world.

In 1971 at the Celebration of Life Music Festival in New Orleans he shared the podium with famous yoga gurus Swami Satchidanda and Swami Vishnudevananda. He participated in many interfaith forums and conferences, including the World Parliament of Religions. In the early 70's he helped organize the first 'Meeting of the Ways' in San Francisco and was co-founder of the Unity of Man Conference. He became Co-President of the World Fellowship of Religions in 1974. He served on the Board of Directors of the American Council of Executives in

Religion and was a member of

When yoga and meditation burst into the western world starting in the 1970s, one teacher steering the spaced out, counter-culture generation in a positive and productive direction was Yogi Bhanjan, based in California and New Mexico. A Sikh by birth, he captured his message as: it is your birthright to be healthy, happy, and holy (3Hs). Taking a lead in interfaith initiatives, one of his favorite sayings was: "If you can't see God in all, you haven't seen God at all."

### Man of Many Hats (or Turbans)

During his time in the United States, Yogi Bhanjan had the occasion to wear many hats, or turbans. He was a businessman, spiritual teacher and religious leader. He was awarded a Doctorate in the Psychology of Communication in the U.S. He was also a master of Ayurvedic healing and head of 14 U.S. corporations, including the computer company Sun and Son, and Kettle Chips and his most successful business, Akal Security, which held many federal contracts and guarded the Federal Court House in Washington, D.C. A savvy entrepreneur he encouraged his students to start their own businesses. One of the first, Yogi Tea, brought his famous recipe into the mainstream, and it is now one of the leading tea companies in the health food market in the USA and Europe. As the Siri Singh Sahib, or leader of Sikhism in the Western Hemisphere, he met with Pope John Paul II in 1983, and again in 1984, to discuss inter-religious dialogue. He also worked side-by-side with the Dalai Lama and the Archbishop of Canterbury.

### Snatam Kaur: A soulful singer



Among many artist and performer devotees of Yogi Bhanjan is Snatam Kaur. An American singer, peace activist and author raised in the Sikh and Kundalini Yoga tradition. She has an amazing ability to transform traditional Sikh chants of India into a contemporary sound that appeals to the modern ear and awakens an ancient yearning in the soul. She learnt from Yogi Bhanjan the essence of Naad Yoga, a form of yoga focusing on sacred sound. At the core of this practice is an essential experience of peace and healing which has helped her music to be accessible to people of all walks of life.

the Interreligious Council of Southern California, the Rotary Club, and the Los Angeles World Affairs Council.

Yogi Bhanjan left his physical body in 2004 at his home in Espanola, New Mexico. The cause of death was complications due to heart failure. He was 75 years old.

Standing six feet three,

his powerful and dynamic presence dominated any gathering. Fearless, outspoken yet humble, he could be both charming and daunting as the occasion required. His open-hearted acceptance of everyone along with an uncompromising insistence upon excellence made him a formidable teacher.



To perpetuate Yogi Bhanjan's spiritual system, New Mexico based International Kundalini Yoga Teachers Association has trained hundreds of teachers.

By Melinda Katz  
Queens Borough President

# The strength of a public health response to gun violence

Across the nation, we have all been witness to the distressing routine: People are murdered by gun violence—we experience collective outrage, calls for tighter gun control laws, calls for greater mental health awareness and truly heartfelt thoughts and prayers for the victims. Yet time after time, incident after incident, nothing changes, and parents and children are left to deal with “active shooter drills” and “lock down drills” in our schools as part of our new normal.

Even more depressingly, this conversation only occurs after deadly mass shootings that draw national media attention.

The far more common and deadly gun violence that occurs every day barely gets reported at all. So although stronger gun laws, better mental health care and more thoughts and prayers all have value—and they do—we still find ourselves no closer to truly addressing the gun violence pandemic that results in thousands of deaths every year.

The Parkland shooting, and the incredibly courageous students who are intent on disrupting the predictable cycle of inaction, has forced a longer dialogue than we have grown accustomed to and created an opportunity to truly do something different: Rethink gun violence not simply as a criminal justice issue, but as a public health issue that needs a public health response.

Here in Queens and at select sites across New York, we’ve been doing exactly that, treating gun violence not simply as a crime to be prevented, but more realistically as a disease to be cured. And the outcome data are clear—this approach is the solution that works.

Whereas public health research on gun violence has absurdly been made impossible at the federal level by NRA-driven restrictions on the national Centers of Disease Control and Prevention, cities and states are joining together to do research into this life-or-death public health crisis and promote solutions.

The NYC Cure Violence program, operating through groups such as Man Up! Inc. in Brooklyn and Save our Streets South Bronx, has been successful in introducing the idea of “violence interrupters” into communities plagued by gun violence, with definable, measurable success. In Southeast Queens, LIFE Camp works every day to give young people better skills and awareness to



*In Queens and at select sites across New York, we have been treating gun violence not simply as a crime to be prevented, but more realistically as a disease to be cured.*

defuse conflicts before they escalate.

Our groups recognize the ultimate truth about gun violence—that it is as contagious as any disease and that as it spreads to pandemic levels, it becomes harder and harder to control.

At LIFE Camp, work has been focused on a specific part of Southeast Queens. Bordered by 111th Street and 118th Street between Sutphin Boulevard and Guy R. Brewer Boulevard, this precinct had previously been identified as the highest crime precinct in the borough. But by applying NYC’s Crisis Management Model with a “Cure Violence” model as its foundation, the area went from four gun deaths per year to zero for the past four years, and from 17 shootings per year to not a single shooting incident for 568 days. Across the city, 21 other sites that are also part of this pilot program have seen similar reductions in gun violence, helping make New York the safest big city in America.

This outcome shows the strength of using a public health response to interrupt and cure violence as you would with any other disease. It offers hope for helping young people end a cycle of violence that our nation has heretofore seemed unable to address. Investing in curing violence is investing in helping young people heal, in learning violence interruption strategies and in playing a collective role in their own community’s public safety.

## Melinda Katz, a friend of the community



### ANNUAL NAGAR KIRTAN IN RICHMOND HILL

Borough President Katz joined the Nagar Kirtan (parade) in Richmond Hill organized by the Sikh Cultural Society on September 9. Families and members of the Sikh Punjabi communities throughout the tri-state area came to the Borough of Queens to enjoy the procession.



### NYPD DESI SOCIETY ANNUAL FAMILY PICNIC

Borough President Katz and Councilmember Donovan Richards joined the families and friends of the NYPD Desi Society on September 9 at its Annual Family Picnic at Cunningham Park in Fresh Meadows. Patrolman’s Benevolent Association President Patrick Lynch (r.) also joined the festivities. The NYPD Desi Society is the nation’s first fraternal organization representing South Asian American law enforcement officers.



### SOUTHERN QUEENS PARK’S SENIOR MONTH BREAKFAST

As part of the Southern Queens Park Association’s 15th Annual Senior Month celebration, Borough President Katz was pleased to deliver remarks at a September 12 breakfast sponsored by State Senator Leroy Comrie. The Borough President also greeted many of the attendees and distinguished guests.

With the effective public health model that has been developed, we can now expand to a full-scale public health response, as aggressive as smallpox and polio eradication, to inoculate our country and stop the spread of this ongoing and very, very deadly disease.

--With Erica Ford, CEO of LIFE Camp, Inc.



A Democrat coming from a Jewish family, Melinda Katz has earlier served in the New York State Assembly as well as NY City Council. She won the Queens Borough President election in 2013 and was re-elected in 2017.

# Religions support human welfare & development

## – Jain guru Acharya Lokesh Muni

**Chicago:** The World Hindu Congress organized here from 7 to 9 September 2018 to celebrate the 125th anniversary of historical speech given by Swami Vivekananda at Parliament of World's Religions was inaugurated by RSS Chief Mohan Bhagwat, the founder of Ahimsa Vishwa Bharti, Acharya Dr. Lokesh Muni, Swami Swarupananda, Purnatmananda, Sadguru Dilipji and others. Over 2000 representatives from 80 countries took part in the program.

Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi sent his message for the Congress. The Dalai Lama and Art of Living founder Sri Sri Ravi Shankar gave video message on the occasion.

PM Modi in his message said that various aspects of Hindu philosophy can solve many problems confronting the world. Yet, he insisted on the use of technology to connect more and more people who believe in Hindutva. He added that we can better connect the younger generation with Hindutva by bringing our epics and



RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat, Acharya Lokesh Muni, Swamis Swarupananda and Purnatmananda, and Satguru Dalip Singh at the Congress opening.

scriptures in digital form. He expressed hope that the conference will discuss how India can connect intellectually and culturally with the world in a better manner through the

ancient treasures of its knowledge...

Acharya Lokesh Muni said that India has always shown the path of spirituality to the world. This was proved 125 years back by Swami

Vivekananda and Shri Vir Chand Raghav Ji Gandhi who represented Jainism at the Parliament of Religions. He said that India is a symbol of Unity in Diversity. Manu religions like Hindu, Jain, Buddh and Sikh were born in India, and their followers even today live in harmony. Followers of Christianity, Islam, and Parsis and Jews too came to India and they were accepted with open hearts. "I want to send the message that all religions preach humanity.

Since early civilization religion has always brought people together to move ahead towards development."

Acharya Lokesh expressed pride in belonging to Jainism, which has taught the world both tolerance and universal acceptance. He called the Jain philosophy of Non-Violence, Peace and Harmony as the need of the time for humanity when people are faced with myriad problems like violence, global warming and income inequality. Dr. Abhay Asthana was Coordinator of the World Hindu Congress.

## Hindus don't oppose anyone, don't want to dominate: RSS chief

**Chicago:** Asserting that Hindus neither oppose anybody nor aspire to dominate, Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) chief Mohan Bhagwat last Saturday said the community needs to unite to end its centuries of sufferings.

Speaking at the 2nd World Hindu Congress here that marked the 125th anniversary of Swami Vivekananda's historic speech at the Parliament of World Religions in 1893, Bhagwat said the key to unite the world is to control ego and accepting the consensus.

"We do not have any aspects of dominance. Hindus do not live to oppose anybody. We even allow the pests to live. There are people who may oppose us. You have to tackle them without harming them," said Bhagwat addressing delegates from across the globe.

"Why are we suffering for 1000 years? We had everything but we forgot to practise values. We also forgot to work together. Hindu society has largest number of meritorious people in many sectors. But they never come together, stay together. "Coming together of Hindus itself was a difficult task.



RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat speaking at the 2nd World Hindu Congress in Chicago marking the 125th anniversary of Swami Vivekananda's historic speech at the Parliament of World Religions in the same city in 1893.

Earlier, when our Swayamsevaks would try to organize people, they would say 'a lion never walks in a group', but even that lion or a Royal Bengal Tiger who is the king of the jungle... if he is alone, wild dogs together can invade and destroy him....," he said calling upon Hindus to unite.

He cited Mahabharata, "Of all the main characters, Krishna never contradicted Yudhishtir and Yudhishtir never disobeyed Krishna because it is important to work unitedly, keeping your ego aside."

## Preservation of India's heritage is nationalism: Vice president Naidu

India's Vice President M. Venkaiah Naidu appealed to the 2nd World Hindu Congress delegates to follow the ideals of Swami Vivekananda. He was delivering the keynote address at the concluding session of the congress that marked the 125th anniversary of the great saint's exposition of Hinduism to the western world in Chicago. Naidu peppered his speech with generous Sanskrit and Telugu quotes. He extensively referred to Swami Vivekananda's epoch-making address, which described Hindu philosophy as "discovering of spiritual well springs" that have sustained the world for many centuries.

The philosophy of tolerance and acceptance of all religions, was an essential part of the timeless, eternal, holistic, integrated and universal worldview of Hinduism. Naidu reiterated that "Hinduism is a way of life and share and care is the core of Hindu philosophy."

He elaborated on some of the essential elements of Hinduism, namely the breadth of its vision in treating the world as one family,



Vice President M. Venkaiah Naidu extensively referred to Swami Vivekananda's epoch-making 1893 address, which described Hindu philosophy as "discovering of spiritual wellsprings" that have sustained the world for centuries.

tolerance and acceptance of plurality, unity in diversity, and that truth is one though wise men describe it in different ways. Naidu especially highlighted the place of women in Hindu society and discredited the view that women's role is at home. All rivers in India have been named after women and the country itself is called motherland, he said.

Citing Mahatma Gandhi, Naidu said "Rama rajya is not complete without gram rajya," meaning rejuvenation and celebration of rural India, with an emphasis on agriculture and farming. That is a neces-

sary tool to bridge the urban-rural divide, he said.

One should not condemn or appease other religions for the sake of votes, Naidu noted. Compassion, service, charity, gender equality, protection of the environment and such noble aspects are key ingredients of Hindu philosophy and they are more relevant today than ever before, he said.

The theme of the World Hindu Congress, "Think collectively, achieve valiantly," was an apt motto, Naidu said.

True nationalism is in the preservation of India's invaluable heritage, though some may consider the term Hindu as undesirable or untouchable. In this context, Naidu said, "We should guard against aberrations in Hinduism." "To serve fellow countrymen is patriotism," according to Naidu. "Kanyakumari to Kashmir, India is one nation, irrespective of religion or regions," Naidu said. The organizers announced that the third World Hindu Conference will be held in Bangkok, Thailand, from Nov. 4 to 6, 2022. The conference theme will be "Victory of dharma, not adharm."

# SANT RAJINDER SINGH OPENS NATIONAL HQ IN CHICAGO

**Lisle, IL:** Over the last three decades, Sant Rajinder Singh Ji Maharaj has impacted the lives of millions of people throughout the world with his message of personal transformation through meditation on the inner Light and Sound. As witness to his global influence, thousands of people from 30 different countries gathered in Lisle, IL on July 28 for the inauguration of the new National Headquarters for the Science of Spirituality.

Accompanied by dignitaries from local cities, the U.S. Senate and the House of Representatives, Sant Rajinder Singh Ji Maharaj cut the ribbon to inaugurate the iconic building. The organization's new home embodies love, grace, and universality, bringing together design elements from the East and the West.

The ribbon-cutting took place in front of the reflecting pool where a three-ton sculpture named "The Meditator" embodies the Science of Spirituality logo and represents a person in meditation.

Perhaps one of the most interesting features of the building is a separate golden circular structure



*(from left) Wheaton Mayor Michael Gresk, Mata Rita Ji, Sant Rajinder Singh Maharaj, US Congressman Bill Foster and Village of Lisle Mayor Chris Pecak at the inauguration.*

designed as a meditation sanctuary.

In his address, Sant Rajinder Singh Ji Maharaj outlined the four main purposes of the Meditation Center:

"We have a wisdom awaiting us deep within. Instead of only logging onto the Internet, we can take some time daily to log into our own inner essence to lead to a wisdom to enrich our lives. We can discover how to enter our personal sanctuary through meditation, leading to inner and outer peace and lasting joy.

Meditation can help us uncover our spiritual side and discover the wonders within."

Congressman Bill Foster, from the 11th District of Illinois, commented on how the Science of Spirituality has brought together people from all back-

grounds.

Congratulatory letters were read from two US Senators from Illinois, Dick Durbin and Tammy Duckworth. Rep Grace Meng from New York in her message said: "I commend Science of Spirituality for its unwavering dedication to supporting its community and beyond."

When the Meditation Center opens its doors to the public in September, not only will the community find a sanctuary of peace where they can spend time in meditation, but they will also be able to register for a variety of free classes, programs, and events. **For more information see: [www.sos.org](http://www.sos.org)**



*Sant Rajinder Singh Ji Maharaj inaugurates spectacular new national headquarters of Science of Spirituality movement founded by him.*

## SOS holds Spiritual Fair in Long Island



*The hall of Science of Spirituality Meditation Center in Amityville hummed with activity on the day of Spiritual Fair.*



*A group deep in meditation during the daylong program.*

**Amityville, NY:** Science of Spirituality, founded by Sant Rajinder Singh Ji Maharaj, is remarkable in that all its activities and programs, meditation courses, camps and retreats are always free of charge and open to people of all religions and nationalities. Many of such programs are held round the year at their Long Island meditation center in Amityville. Like every year, the Darshan Mela - Spiritual Fair, named after the Master of Sant Rajinder Singh Maharaj, was held on September 9 this month. It was billed as a day of fun, entertainment and spiritual contemplation. Kids and teenagers availed face painting, arts and crafts and workshops. For adults, there were workshops on Meditation and Vegetarian lifestyle. The International food court served delicious vegetarian food. Free basic medical checkups were also conducted.



*Free basic medical checkups were conducted.*

### Meditation on the Inner Light & Sound

**S**ant Rajinder Singh Ji Maharaj teaches a meditation consisting of two practices: meditation on the inner Light called simran practice, and meditation on the inner Sound called bhajan practice. In the former, practitioners focus their

attention at a point between and behind the eyebrows to experience the inner Light. For the second practice, meditators focus on the inner Sound. Sant Rajinder Singh Ji Maharaj also teaches an introductory technique, called Jyoti Meditation

("Jyoti" means "light"), which helps one experience peace, calm, and happiness. Maharaj ji says that by mastering meditation, we not only attain personal fulfillment, we become an instrument for bringing peace and joy to those around us.

# No Glass Ceiling for these Sikhs

**B**orn to Sikh immigrant parents, Nikki Haley has the distinction of being the first woman Indian American to rise to become the Governor of a state in America – South Carolina. And under President Donald Trump she became the first Indian American to become the US Ambassador to United Nations with a cabinet rank. She served in the South Carolina House of Representatives from 2005-2011 and as state

Governor till January 2017. Her parents, Ajit Singh Randhawa and Raj Kaur Randhawa, had migrated to the U.S. from Amritsar in Punjab and she was born Nimrata in 1972 in Bamberg, South Carolina. Her husband Michael Haley is an officer in the South Carolina Army National Guard and she now identifies as a Christian, but remains proud of her Sikh heritage. Nikki Haley is considered a potential

## Nikki Haley

US Ambassador to the UN

Republican presidential candidate in 2024, if not 2020.

*As South Carolina Governor, Nikki Haley prayed with her husband Michael Haley at the Golden Temple in Amritsar in 2014.*



## Navtej Singh Sarna

Indian Ambassador to the US

**N**avtej Singh Sarna is a career diplomat currently serving as India's Ambassador to the United States. He previously served as the High Commissioner of India to the United Kingdom, and as the Ambassador to Israel.

Born in Jalandhar, Punjab, he belongs to the 1980 Class of Indian Foreign Service officers. Before the UK appointment he was the longest-serving spokesperson of the Ministry of External Affairs, serving under two prime ministers, three foreign ministers and four foreign secretaries.

A published author, he has written *The Book of Nanak*, and *The Exile*, based on the life of Duleep Singh, son of Maharaja Ranjit Singh who established the Sikh empire.

As India's envoy in Washington, Sarna has played a



*India's Ambassador to the US, Navtej Singh Sarna*

key role in further strengthening India-US relations. He has been associated as writer with the International Center for Sikh Studies which is getting ready for a launch next April in New Delhi.

## Gurbir Grewal

Attorney General, New Jersey



*Gurbir Grewal is the first Sikh-American Attorney General in United States history.*

**G**urbir Grewal is the 61st Attorney General of the State of New Jersey. Appointed by the Democratic Governor of New Jersey Phil Murphy, he was confirmed by the state Senate on January 16, 2018. He became the first Sikh-American Attorney General in United States history.

Grewal was formerly the county prosecutor of Bergen County, New Jersey, originally appointed in 2016.

Son of Indian immigrants, he has a B.A. degree from the

Georgetown University School of Foreign Service and J.D. degree from William & Mary Law School. He is fluent in Punjabi and Hindi languages.

In July this year two WKXW radio show hosts were suspended for calling Grewal "turban man" on air. On Twitter, the attorney general said the comments underscored discrimination he's had to overcome as a Sikh public official. "This is not the first indignity I've faced and it probably won't be the last," he wrote.

"Sometimes, I endure it alone. Yesterday, all of New Jersey heard it. It's time to end small-minded intolerance."

## Ravinder Singh Bhalla

Mayor of Hoboken, New Jersey

**R**avinder Singh Bhalla, often simply called Ravi Bhalla, is an American civil rights lawyer, politician, and the mayor of Hoboken, New Jersey. Prior to becoming mayor, he served in the city council of Hoboken, NJ since 2009. On November 7, 2017, he was elected the state's first Sikh mayor, overcoming a racist campaign by his detractors. He was sworn in on January 1, 2018 by US Senator from New Jersey Cory Booker, who said in his speech: "Today is not a victory for a narrow community. It is a victory for the principles and ideals of the United States of America."

*Ravinder Singh Bhalla took the oath of office as Hoboken Mayor on the Guru Granth Sahib, held up by his wife. The oath was administered by US Senator from New Jersey Cory Booker.*

