

ONE WORLD UNDER GOD



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

Publisher: Darshan Singh Bagga

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The Power of Prayer

Prayer is the oldest and the simplest expression of religion

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Parliament of the World's Religions

Comes to Toronto next month

Swami Vivekananda's Legacy

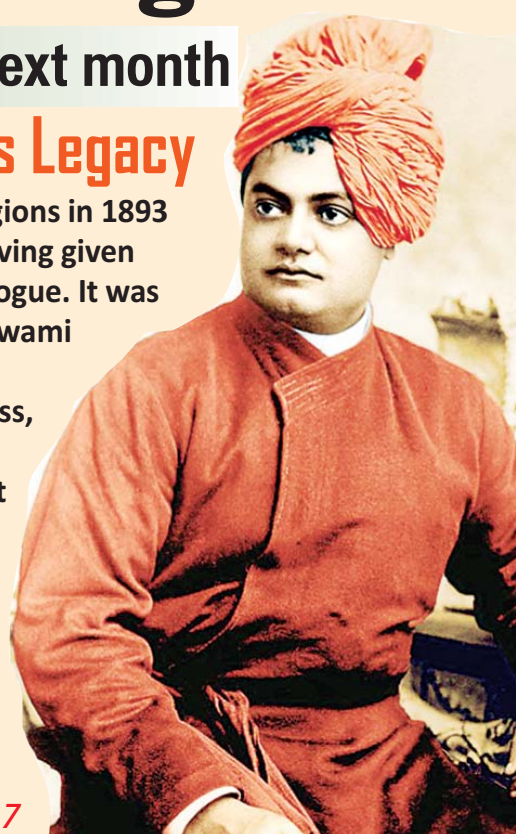
The first World's Parliament of Religions in 1893 in Chicago is recognized today as having given birth to of formal interreligious dialogue. It was



made famous by Swami Vivekananda's momentous address, leading to more dynamic East-West interface. The

event was celebrated by another conference on its centenary in 1993, also in Chicago, followed by a new series of conferences, the 2018 being hosted by Toronto from November 1 - 7, 2018.

...Pages 2 and 7



A few Keynote Speakers at Parliament of World's Religions, Toronto

Cardinal Thomas Christopher Collins



He is a Canadian cardinal of the Catholic Church. He is the 10th and current Archbishop of Toronto, having previously served as Bishop of Saint Paul in Alberta and Archbishop of Edmonton.

Swami Agnivesh



He is a New Delhi based leader of Arya Samaj, a branch of Hinduism. He was awarded the Right Livelihood award, known as the Alternative Nobel, in 2004, for his work for social justice.

Rabbi David Rosen



He is the former Chief Rabbi of Ireland and now serves as Director of the American Jewish Committee's Dept of Interreligious Affairs and Heilbrunn Institute for International Interreligious Understanding.

Eboo Patel



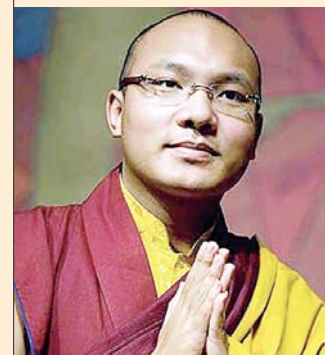
He is the Founder and President of Interfaith Youth Core, a non-profit working to make interfaith cooperation a social norm. He served on President Obama's Inaugural Faith Council.

Simran Jeet Singh



Simran Jeet Singh He is a professor of religion at Trinity University and Senior Religion Fellow for the Sikh Coalition. This year he also serves as Fellow for Religion in International Affairs at NYU's Center for Religion and Media.

The Karmapa



H.H. the 17th Karmapa, Ogyen Trinley Dorje, heads the 900-year-old Karma Kagyu school of Tibetan Buddhism. He is based in a monastery in Himachal Pradesh in India after his dramatic escape from Tibet in year 2000.

The world's premier interfaith event

It all started with the first World's Parliament of Religions held in Chicago in 1893 aimed to start formal interreligious dialogue.

Courtesy Swami

Vivekananda's momentous address there the West started becoming aware of the wisdom traditions of the East. That event was celebrated 100 years later with another conference in 1993 in Chicago, followed by a new series of conferences, the seventh being hosted by Toronto from November 1 - 7, 2018.

The venue of the Parliament is The Metro Toronto Convention Centre (MTCC). Canada - in its distinction as home of the world's most diverse city, will showcase its unique values, achievements, and aspirations as the 7th host of the Parliament of the World's Religions.

For its 2018 theme, the Parliament draws from movements of goodwill and cross-cultural respect that are embodied in the spirit of the interfaith movement:

The Promise of Inclusion, the Power of Love:

Pursuing Global Understanding, Reconciliation, and Change

The Parliament will feature more than 500 programs and events across six major tracks:

- » The Women's Track: The Dignity of Women Across the World's Wisdom Traditions
- » Countering War, Hate & Violence Track: Peace and Love: Not War, Hate &

The 2018 Parliament of the World's Religions is being held in Toronto from November 1-7.



- Violence
- » Climate Action Track: Care for Our Earth, Responsibility for Our Future
- » The Indigenous Peoples' Track: The Spiritual Evolution of Humanity & Healing Our Mother Earth
- » The Next Generations Track: Interfaith Has No Age, Youth Voices for Change
- » Justice: Advancing Concrete Change Toward a Just, Peaceful, and Sustainable World

MISSION

The Parliament of the World's Religions was created to cultivate harmony among the world's religious and spiritual communities and foster their engagement with the world and its guiding institutions in order to achieve a just, peaceful and sustainable world.

VISION

The vision of the Parliament of the World's Religions is of a just, peaceful and sustainable world in which:

- » Religious and spiritual communities live in harmony and contribute to a better world from their riches of wisdom and compassion.
- » Religious and cultural fears and hatreds are replaced with understanding and respect.
- » People everywhere come to know and care for their neighbors.
- » The richness of human and religious diversity is woven into the fabric of communal, civil, societal and global life.
- » The world's most powerful and influential institutions move beyond narrow self-interest to realize common good.
- » The Earth and all life are

cherished, protected, healed and restored.

- » All people commit to living out their highest values and aspirations.

Expected attendance will exceed 10,000 persons of faith and conscience from 80 nations and more than 200 unique spiritual backgrounds. The Parliament offers programming for all, from scholars and activists to families and children - lectures to interactive cultural experiences. Participants can be individuals whose profession or personal interests lead them to the Parliament or delegations from the guiding institutions like states, universities, or religious organizations. Parliament presenters include students, clergy, interfaith leaders, scholars, Nobel Laureates, city mayors, spiritual luminaries, best-selling authors, globally-recognized entertainers, thought leaders, state actors, and more.

THE INAUGURAL INTERFAITH FAMILY FESTIVAL

The Parliament of the World's Religions, in collaboration with Spiritual Playdate, is hosting the inaugural Interfaith Family Festival at the 2018 Parliament from November 2-6 at the Metro Toronto Convention Centre.

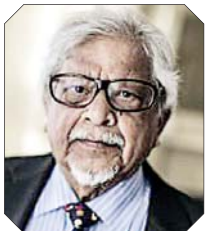
The first festival of its kind to be hosted at a Parliament, the Interfaith Family Festival provides parents, teachers, and children the opportunity to immerse themselves in interfaith and multi-cultural programming, performances, and service events. The festival features 5 days of joyful, engaging, and experiential spiritual exploration for kids, teens, families, schools, faith groups, and all who are young at heart as they celebrate this year's theme "Plant an Interfaith Garden". Attendees will have the opportunity to experience the world's faith traditions through:

Interactive Games and Apps; Live Theatrical and Musical Performances on the Festival Stage; Yoga, Meditation, Movement, and Chant; and Fun Small Group Spiritual Discovery Sessions.

Keynote Speakers

Arun Gandhi

Dr. Arun Gandhi, grandson of Mahatma Gandhi, was born into apartheid South Africa in 1934 where he became a victim of violence. He went to India in 1946 to live with his grandfather and directly benefitted from daily one-to-one lessons. Arun is the founder of the M.K. Gandhi Institute for Nonviolence and is the Founding President of the Gandhi Worldwide Education Institute. This charitable organization currently supports over 1000 children in India with shelter, food, and education. He is an international bestselling author. His



most recent book is 'The Gift of Anger and other lessons from my Grandfather'. He is also on Board Emeriti of Parliament of the World's Religions.

Pardeep Singh Kaleka

Pardeep Singh Kaleka is the son of Satwant Singh Kaleka, the president of the Sikh Temple of Wisconsin who was gunned down during the attacks of August 5, 2012. Being a former Milwaukee Police Officer and a current teacher in the inner city, Pardeep is no stranger to the never ending battle against



racism, bigotry, and ignorance. He firmly believes that the lamp of knowledge and truth will outshine all the darkness in the world, and does his best to profess this through his work with Serve 2 Unite.

Parisa Khosravi

She is a strategic adviser and a multi award winning veteran journalist and news executive. She speaks on the topic of compassionate leadership to audiences across private and public sectors. Throughout her career as senior vice president for international news gathering, national news gathering, global relations and the first ever ambassador for CNN Worldwide, Parisa directed historic coverage of countless



award-winning news stories. She left CNN in 2015.

Shilapiji

Maharaj Sadhvi

With her simplistic approach to the doctrines of Ahimsa, Love and Compassion, Sadhvi Shilapiji Maharaj appeals to people from every faith and all walks of life. With an M.Phil in Comparative Religion from the University of London, she is the first Jain nun to have pursued overseas education. Proficient in many languages, she is a learned scholar of Jain philosophy and has been invited to deliver lectures at Oxford, Harvard and other top universities. A great philosopher and orator, she has also spoken at global conventions like the



World Religion Conference in Cape Town and Chicago as well as the Interfaith Meeting in Israel, among others.

Abubakar Khan

Abubakar Khan is a young American-Canadian-Pakistani Muslim. He is the co-founder of The Chosen Khan, an online platform that highlights diversity, interfaith and creative dialogue. He has planned rallies such as the Love Over Fear Rally against Islamophobia. & the one against Racial Discrimination. Currently he is acting, producing and writing a short film & a documentary series aimed at humanizing & uniting people.



CNN's 'Sikhs in America' episode wins an Emmy

By Darshan Singh Bagga

I like this guy on CNN, with a difficult to pronounce name, 'W. Kamau Bell'. He is said to be a comedian, but I tell you, he is damn serious when it comes to the documentary series brilliantly named "United Shades of America" hosted by him. While noting that America is increasingly becoming multi-cultural, and multi-racial, the award winning show also highlights the tensions and issues this change is causing, not to speak of the unique challenges the new communities face. I occasionally caught Kamau Bell's show on CNN, but I know in advance and so watched keenly on May 6 his hour-long episode focusing on the Sikh Indian American story. I was happy to learn that the episode titled 'Sikhs in America' won an Emmy Award at the Creative Arts Emmys held in Los Angeles, Calif. on Sept. 8.

While the show won the honor for 'Outstanding Unstructured Reality Program,' the episode focusing on Sikhs, "Sikhs in America," was declared the winner in the 'Outstanding Picture Editing for an Unstructured Reality Program' category.

In the episode, Bell visited Yuba

City, Calif., saying, "I'm hoping to find out more about the most misunderstood religion in America." Yuba City has the largest concentration of Sikhs in America, a total 500,000 live in the country. It also hosts an annual event called Nagar Kirtan, for which 100,000 people flow in. Its current Mayor is a Sikh woman, named Preet Didbal.

Throughout the episode, Bell interviews Sikh Americans from various parts of the country: Harpreet Singh, co-founder of the Sikh Coalition; Sikh Coalition Social Justice Fellow Winty Singh; Mayor Preet Didbal; Karandeep Bains, Yuba City farmer and community leader; lawyer and filmmaker Valarie Kaur; Lt. Col. Kamaljeet Singh Kalsi; actor/designer Waris Ahluwalia; and Harpreet Singh's son, Dilzafer Singh.

It was the first time the nation saw Sikhs tell their own stories, in their own voices, and it went on to receive the highest honor in the industry!

The episode 'Sikhs in America' came about after Harpreet Singh reached out to Bell on Twitter. "The Sikhs as a community have

had their fair share of hate so I thought this would be an excellent venue for people to learn more about the Sikhs and the issues we face in America," Harpreet Singh said at the beginning of his interview. "Sikhism is a religion of love, and this love requires sacrifice for others, especially for the oppressed, the marginalized, the down-trodden, for example, we had Sikhs showing up in war-torn Syria, providing humanitarian aid... in Haiti during the earthquake. There has never been an instance when Sikhs have not opened their gurdwaras during calamities like Katrina."

Didbal, the first female Sikh mayor in America, said: "Under God, we are all equal, that's how Sikhism is. We are all created equal, men and women, it doesn't matter. I say, 'We need to walk the talk'."

Waris Ahluwalia recounted how he was assaulted after 9/11, following which he nearly lost vision in his right eye.

The episode also highlighted the agricultural tradition of the community, the Sikh articles of faith and the religion's history.



In the hour-long episode, Show's host Kamau Bell travels to various parts of the country to document the experiences of prominent Sikhs (like Harpreet Singh of the Sikh Coalition), touching upon issues related to identity, inclusion and discrimination faced by the people of the faith especially after the 9/11 attacks.

Prof. Tarunjit S. Butalia

While making plans to attend the World Parliament of Religions in Toronto, I came across the name of Dr. Tarunjit S.

Butalia, a member of the Board of Trustees of this Parliament. His day job is as Research Associate Professor, Civil, Environmental & Geodetic Engineering at the Ohio State University. His interfaith resume is long: he is founding trustee of the Sikh Council for Interfaith Relations. He also serves on the board of Religions for Peace – USA and is its former Moderator. He is a Board member of the North American Interfaith Network and is former Vice-Chair. He has served on the board of the National Religious Coalition Against Torture as well as the World Sikh Council – America Region. He works locally with the Interfaith Association of Central Ohio.



Dr. Simran Jeet Singh

I am a Sikh but not from Punjab, the state in India where three-quarters of the 27 million world population of Sikhs live. Punjab is called the wheat bowl of India. Sikhs, in particular, are

an agricultural community and very hardworking. That gave rise to a stereotype and the joke that the only culture Sikhs or Punjabis know is agriculture. Well, now increasingly I am coming across Sikhs in America who are excelling in cultural and intellectual pursuits belying that stereotype.

Take Dr Simran Jeet Singh. His name figures as a Keynote Speaker at the Parliament of the World's Religions in Toronto next month. I am impressed by his qualifications and accomplishments at a young age. He is an award-winning educator, writer, activist, and scholar who believes deeply that love, equi-

ty, and justice are closely intertwined. He writes and speaks regularly on issues of diversity, inclusion, civil rights, religion, and hate violence. Simran is a professor of religion at Trinity University and Senior Religion Fellow for the Sikh Coalition, a civil rights organization based in New York City. This year, Simran serves as the Henry R. Luce Fellow for Religion in International Affairs at NYU's Center for Religion and Media. He is also on the board for Religion News Association, a fellow for the Truman National Security Project, and a term-member for the Council on Foreign Relations. He also serves on New York Governor Cuomo's Interfaith

Advisory Committee for the State.

Simran holds graduate degrees from Harvard University and Columbia University, and he is the author of "Covering Sikhs," a guidebook to help journalists accurately report on the Sikh community. He is currently working on two book projects: one examines the intersection of race and religion in modern Islamophobia, and the other focuses on the formative moments of the Sikh tradition and its founder, Guru Nanak.

Born and raised in San Antonio, Texas, Simran is a diehard Spurs fan and avid marathoner. He currently lives with his wife and daughter in Manhattan.

The Power of Prayer

Prayer is the oldest and the simplest expression of religion. Now even scientific research has established that it works. So, how can we pray to have our heart's desire fulfilled? Here are some notes from various religions.

Our Father who art in heaven,
Hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come.
Thy will be done
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us,
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
and the power, and the glory,
for ever and ever
Amen.

-Lord's Prayer, New Testament

Lord, make me an instrument of Your peace;
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;
Where there is injury, pardon;
Where there is doubt, faith;
Where there is despair, hope;
Where there is darkness, light;
And where there is sadness, joy.
O Divine Master, grant that I may not
Seek to be consoled as to console;
To be understood as to understand;
To be loved as to love;
For it is in giving that we receive,
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
And it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.
A hymn by St Francis of Assisi,

Om, May All become Happy,
May All be Free from Illness)
May All See what is Auspicious,
May no one Suffer in any way .
Om Peace, Peace, Peace.

-Hymn from Upanishad

The first rule in prayer is to approach God only with legitimate desires. The second is to pray for their fulfillment, not as a beggar, but as a son: "I am thy child. Thou art my Father. Thou and I are One."

—Paramahansa Yogananda

- Salat al-fajr: dawn, before sunrise
 - Salat al-zuhr: midday, after the sun passes its highest
 - Salat al-'asr: the late part of the afternoon
 - Salat al-maghrib: just after sunset
 - Salat al-'isha: between sunset and midnight
- Muslims are ordained to pray five times a day**

Praise be to Allah,
Lord of the Universe,
the Beneficent, the Merciful,
Master of the Day of Judgement.
You alone we worship,
and to You alone we turn for help.
Guide us to the straight path.
The path of those who have found Your favour,
not of those who have incurred Your wrath,
nor of those who have gone astray.

—The Quran (1: 1-7)

When My servants ask you about me,
tell them that I am near.
I answer the prayer
of every supplicant who calls to Me;
therefore let them respond to Me,
and put their trust in Me,
that they may be rightly guided.

—The Quran (2: 186)

I go to the Buddha for refuge.
I go to the Dhamma for refuge.
I go to the Sangha for refuge.

-Buddhism: The Refuge Prayer



I bow in reverence to Arihants
I bow in reverence to Siddhas
I bow in reverence to Acharyas
I bow in reverence to Upadhyayas
Namo Loya Savva Sahunam - I bow in reverence to all Sadhus
This five-fold salutation
Destroys all sins
And amongst all auspicious things
Is the most auspicious one

-Jain Namokar mantra

Hear, Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is One.
Blessed be the Name of His glorious kingdom for ever and ever
And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.
And these words that I command you today shall be in your heart.
And you shall teach them diligently to your children, and you shall speak of them when you sit at home, and when you walk along the way, and when you lie down and when you rise up.
And you shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be for frontlets between your eyes.
And you shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

-Judaism: Origin: The book of Deuteronomy, chapter 6

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INVITATION

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Why I founded this Interfaith Journal

By Darshan Singh Bagga

I am often asked why being a Sikh I started this interfaith journal 'One World Under God'. I point out that the origins of Sikhism are steeped in interfaith. Its founder, Guru Nanak Dev ji always traveled far and wide as depicted with his two close disciples, Bala and Mardana, a Hindu and a Muslim, the two religions extant at that time in India. The dialogue on inter-religious understanding and pluralism is as relevant today as it was 5 centuries ago. I believe that there are many faiths, but the message is the same. Which is conveyed in a condensed manner in the 'Awwal allah noor upaya'



verse from the Guru Granth Sahib, the sacred scripture of the Sikhs. Translated, it says, "First God created the Light; then, by His Creative Power, He made all mortal beings. From the One Light, the entire universe welled up. So, who is high-

er and who is lower?"

I am also excited to carry the news of this new publication, 'One World Under God', to the Parliament of the World's Religions in Toronto in the first week of November. Toronto has been a perfect venue for this Parliament that takes



I have come to admire canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. In February this year he with his family visited the Golden Temple In Amritsar, the holiest Sikh Shrine, and did seva in its kitchen that serves free meals to 50,000 - 100,000 vistors of diverse faiths every day.

Saluting Harpreet Singh



The initiative taken by Harpreet Singh, co-founder of the Sikh Coalition, made the Emmy winning 'Sikhs in America' on CNN possible.

Thank you, Supervisor Saladino



A prayerful Hon. Joseph Saladino (5th from right) at the launch of 'One World Under God'.

I want to use this space to give a shout out to Hon. Joseph Saladino, Supervisor of the Town of Oyster Bay, NY. I have heard many politicians and elected officials speak about the importance of tolerance and respecting faiths other than one's own. But as I have come to personally know Supervisor Saladino, he believes it to his core, and is a living example of that. He was gracious enough to accept to be the Chief Guest at the launch on July 22 in Hicksville, NY of this journal 'One World Under God'. There he spoke extempore on interfaith, the core subject matter of this journal. What impressed me more is that afterwards he sent us a signed article to publish in this paper (It appeared in Issue 2).

He is a devout Christian, but he titled his article, 'The Importance of Faith, Tolerance, Humanity and Spirituality'. I

single out one passage from his full page inspiring article:

"As a nation, we welcome all religions and all prayers to our land. We respect every creed, and we honor the diversity of our country and the deep convictions of our people. As a Christian, I believe it is important that we let our lives be characterized by kindness, patience and service to others. It is my religious duty to consider the needs of others before my own. It is essential to demonstrate love, forgiveness, compassion, and to keep the faith, even in difficult moments when our faith is challenged."

He also had a word of praise for me for publishing this journal and for starting Global Interfaith Foundation: "Mr Bagga has done much to promote the general welfare and created an environment of mutual respect and tolerance."

See you in Toronto, Renee

I have known Renee Mehrra for almost two decades -- I was her early supporter when she became the first South Asian

woman to run for NYC Council as a new frontier for her community.

She did not make it but went on to serve in many important positions in the city administration - for example, an adviser in the Women's Cabinet to the NYC Mayor's office of Immigrant Affairs and as a Commissioner on New York City Commission on Human Rights. Many people know her as a television presenter - on ITV, and now TV Asia, Star Bharat etc channels. Not many know that she also has a spiritual bent with a penchant for interfaith work. She believes that we are all one and the same at the level of soul. She has been active in Sant Rajinder Singh Maharaj's Science of Spirituality organization for over a decade. She has been the CEO for Science of Spirituality (SOS) at the United Nations since it secured NGO status in 2013. At the Parliament of the World's Religions in Toronto, she is representing SOS. She will also speak on other topics such as violence against women and on spiritual wellness. She reinforced my plan to also go to Toronto for the religions parliament.



A TV personality and social-political activist, Renee Mehrra is also emerging as an interfaith leader.

Harpreet Singh is known in my community as the co-founder of the Sikh Coalition with a Harvard pedigree. So I was delighted to note that the is one who has impressed upon Kamau Bell of CNN's United Shades of America to make an episode on the Sikh community's issues and challenges in America today. The episode went on to win an Emmy (as we detailed on page 3). Wow!

Harpreet's resume is remarkable. He is a member of the faculty in the Department of South Asian Studies at Harvard University.

He received his PhD in South Asian Religions from the Committee on the Study of Religion at Harvard in 2012.

He also co-founded Academic Room, a platform where academics and subject matter experts from over 200 countries interact, share content and find short-term consulting opportunities.

Harpreet left his career on Wall Street to help found the Sikh Coalition in the wake of hate crimes against Sikh-Americans after 9/11. He serves on the Board of Trustees of the Sikh Scholarship Foundation and on the advisory boards of Institute for Asian American Studies and Sikh Research Institute.

America is home to an extraordinary variety of Christian churches. We have everything from Catholicism to Congregationalism, from independent Pentecostal congregations to highly-connected Presbyterians, from the self-isolated Amish to evangelism-focused Adventists, from the elaborate ritual of the Episcopal Church to the austere Church of Christ.

You may encounter a bewildering array of Christians in your neighborhood. In most parts of the United States, the Assembly of God, Baptists, Catholic Church, Church of Christ, Church of God, Disciples of Christ, Episcopalians, Lutherans, Methodists, Nazarenes, Orthodox Christians, Presbyterians, Reformed Church, Salvation Army, Seventh-Day Adventists and United Church of Christ are represented. Depending on where you live, you may also find the Church of South India, the Church of God in Christ, a Community Church, an Evangelical Covenant or Evangelical Free Church, a Mar Thoma Church, Mennonites, the New Apostolic Church, Old Catholics, the Religious Society of Friends, the Unity School of Christianity or many others.

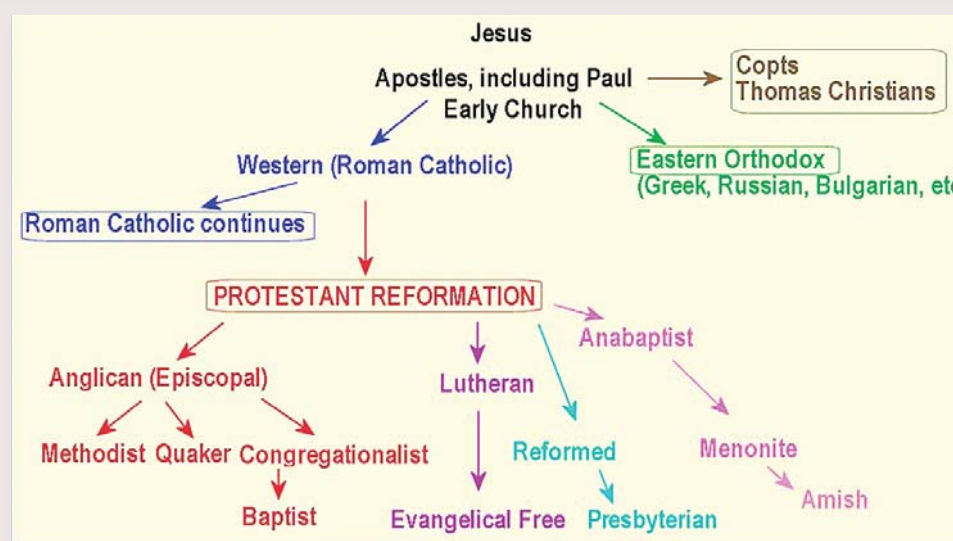
The Christians you are most likely to encounter are Protestant or Catholic. These two branches of Christianity once barely recognized one another as fellow believers, but in recent decades they have drawn much closer. Catholics around the world all belong to the same denomination and have a single leader, the Pope, and a centralized administration in the Vatican City in Rome. Protestants, on the other hand, belong to hundreds of denominations. Some Protestant denominations are highly connected: Episcopalians, Methodists, and Lutherans, for example, have bishops and regional bodies that play a crucial role in determining who is ordained and who will be chosen to lead a particular congregation. Many Protestant congregations, however, are independent, determining themselves whom they will ordain and whom they will hire to be their pastor, with no hierarchy beyond the local church.

If this is not confusing enough—and many Christians themselves find this quite confusing—some of your neighbors are Christians who are neither Catholic nor Protestant. Nearly every year, a Greek Orthodox priest told me, at least one teacher accused one of his children of lying when the child explained that he or she would be absent next week on Good Friday, unaware that not all Christians follow the same calendar for religious holidays. Another child was accused of fibbing when she said her father is a priest: her flustered teacher insisted, “If your father is a priest, then you can’t have a mother!” Most Orthodox clergy have wives and children.

Orthodox Christians sometimes are asked, “Are you still Jewish?” but Orthodox Christians never were Orthodox Jews. During the Cold War,

Who Are All These Christians?

You may encounter a bewildering array of Christians in your neighborhood, and not all may be Catholic or Protestant. Here is a guide to the various denominations, excerpted from ‘Many Names for God: How To Be a Good Neighbor in a Multi-Faith World’.



the Very Reverend Alex Garklavs recalls, he was called “a Commie” because his father was a Russian Orthodox cleric, even though his Orthodox Church in America was militantly anti-communist. People also often assume that Orthodox Christians are “Fresh Off the Boat”—but the boat that brought Greek Orthodox colonists to Florida landed in 1768, and the first Russian Orthodox monks reached North America in 1794. By the time the immigration station opened on Ellis Island, there were Orthodox parishes from Alaska to the East Coast.

Centuries ago, Orthodox Christianity spread into many nations—and people from many of these countries have come to the United States. Your “Eastern Orthodox” neighbors could belong to the Orthodox Church in America, the Greek Orthodox Church, the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia, or the Antiochian Orthodox Archdiocese, among others. There is an Ecumenical Patriarch but he is not the Pope of all Orthodox Christians: rejection of papal supremacy is a key difference between Catholicism and Orthodoxy.

Your neighbor also could belong to the Armenian, Syriac, Coptic (Egyptian), Ethiopian, Eritrean, or Malankara Orthodox Church (also called the Indian Orthodox Church), “Oriental Orthodox” who have much in common with “Eastern Orthodox” Christians. Each tradition within Orthodox Christianity has distinctive ethnic and language roots, and in some parishes, visitors immediately

know that they have entered into the customs of another time and place. In other parishes, ancient faith takes thoroughly modern forms. Some Orthodox Christians cling to the mother tongue of their immigrant ancestors; others use English or whatever the local language happens to be. Nearly a third of the 600 in the “Russian Orthodox Church,” the OCA, no longer have an ethnic majority; more than 100 parishes worship exclusively in English. At an American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox church in Seaford, New York, a few members were raised within Orthodoxy, they worship in English, and just call themselves St. Gregory of Nyssa. Saint Gregory would have approved: he said in the 4th century, “Sin is the failure to grow.”

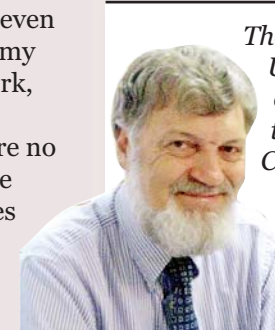
There are also groups with roots in Orthodoxy that are neither Eastern nor Oriental Orthodox. Eastern Catholics (called Eastern-rite or Uniate Catholics in the past) are part of the Catholic Church but preserve the worship traditions of the various Orthodox churches in which they are rooted. As Father Walter Kedjerski puts it, “they are just as Catholic as the Pope.” I never heard of the Molokans myself until recently, even though they have a church near my childhood home in Monterey Park, California. They grew out of the Russian Orthodox Church but are no longer considered Orthodox. The Mar Thoma Church, which traces its roots back to both Syriac Orthodox missionaries of the second century (or earlier), was

By Thomas W. Goodhue

deeply influenced by 19th century Anglican missionaries. Mar Thomas see themselves as a bridge between Orthodoxy and Protestantism, India and the West.

Learning about your neighbors faith may be difficult, but the results of misunderstanding have been tragic. When supposedly-Christian armies from Western Europe tried to drive Muslims from the Holy Land during the Crusades, they also slaughtered Jews and Orthodox Christians: the Crusaders did not recognize the Orthodox as fellow Christians.

Orthodox Christians often disagree among themselves but agree on nearly all major beliefs. And the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops in the U.S., the Standing Conference of Oriental Orthodox Churches, and similar organizations are promoting pan-Orthodox cooperation in the areas of humanitarian aid, religious education, campus ministry, and foreign missions. The Orthodox were among the first members of the National Council of Churches and the World Council of Churches, and in many parts of the country, Orthodox parishes are more involved in local ecumenical efforts than ever before. Fr. Leonid Kishkovsky of Our Lady of Kazan (OCA) in Sea Cliff, New York, has been president of the NCC and a moving force in Christian Churches Together in the U.S.A. One of the gifts offered by the Orthodox is a fresh perspective on many theological issues: having not participated in the Protestant Reformation or the Catholic Counter-Reformation, for example, many of the Catholic-Protestant conflicts that I argued about with my best friend in high school mean nothing to them.



Thomas W. Goodhue is a United Methodist clergyman who led the Long Island Council of Churches for seventeen years. You can reach him at twgoodhue@gmail.com.

Swami Vivekananda's address to the World's Parliament of Religions introduced Hinduism as one of the great religions of the world and brought forth the values that infuse Hinduism which are today well recognized as universal values. Excerpted from a speech Amb. Chakravorty gave at Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Center, New York, on September 16 to commemorate the 125th Anniversary of Swamiji's address in Chicago in 1893.

By Sandeep Chakravorty

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA India's Spiritual Ambassador to the West

Swami Vivekananda's participation in the Parliament of Religions was an epoch making event as it brought to the world stage not only the recognition of Hinduism as one of the great religions of the world but also for bringing forth the values that infuse Hinduism which are today known and considered as universal values. Always stressing the universal and humanistic side of the Vedas, the oldest sacred texts of Hinduism, as well as belief in service rather than dogma, Swamiji infused vigor into Hindu thought, placing less emphasis on the prevailing pacifism.

Hinduism defines India and its people and in turn is defined by it. Every part of India, every grain of sand, every season, every raindrop has contributed to this body of thought, belief, practice and rituals, since times immemorial. Our Shiva resides in Mount Kailas and our Krishna frolicked in the groves of Gokul and Shri Rama roamed the forests of Dandaka or Kishkinda. To this land of the Hindus came Christianity, Zoroastrianism, Islam and other faiths. Also other faiths flowered within India, such as Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism as Hinduism incorporated and coexisted with pristine beliefs such as animism and nature worship. But while India received and welcomed or incorporated within its folds other faiths, there was a general lack of knowledge about the mother of religions in the West. Although there had been travelers and explorers such as Marco Polo and Vasco da Gama, they focused primarily on the material aspects of the East rather than the spiritual. So much so that the West saw India and Indians as spiritually backward and fit for conversion to Christianity.

We need to roll our imagination back a couple of hundred years when along with the merchants of East India Company came preachers and missionaries who thought that Indians had to be uplifted from their spiritual misery. One such example was William Carey who set up his operations in the Danish colony of Serampore. He traveled to India with missionary zeal but was quickly overwhelmed by the richness and diversity of our scriptures that he took upon the task of translating many of them into English. He established in 1816 the Serampore College. The West saw India as a spiritual wilderness largely not permeated by the wisdom of the Church.

In this firmament breaks in Swamiji, with his vision and wisdom of not only spiritual awakening of India but he was also perhaps the first to plant the seeds of India's national movement. To call him the first spiritual Ambassador of India in the modern era would perhaps diminish his stature. He was India's first modern saint. He did not only represent Hindus but made a call for a Religion for the World based on the humanistic values of Vedanta and unity of God. Today it is



At the World's Parliament of Religions, while others spoke of the greatness of their religions, Swami Vivekananda's message was universal.

fashionable to talk of peace, understanding, compassion, tolerance, human rights, civil rights and humanism. But these words and their meanings were not in currency then. Colonization was at its peak and world powers were merrily busy in subjugating peoples for exploiting them and they were happy to use religion as a weapon for colonization. Imagine, the Archbishop of Canterbury refused to send anyone to represent the Church of England at the Parliament of Religions because he could not think of Christianity being on the same platform as other religions!

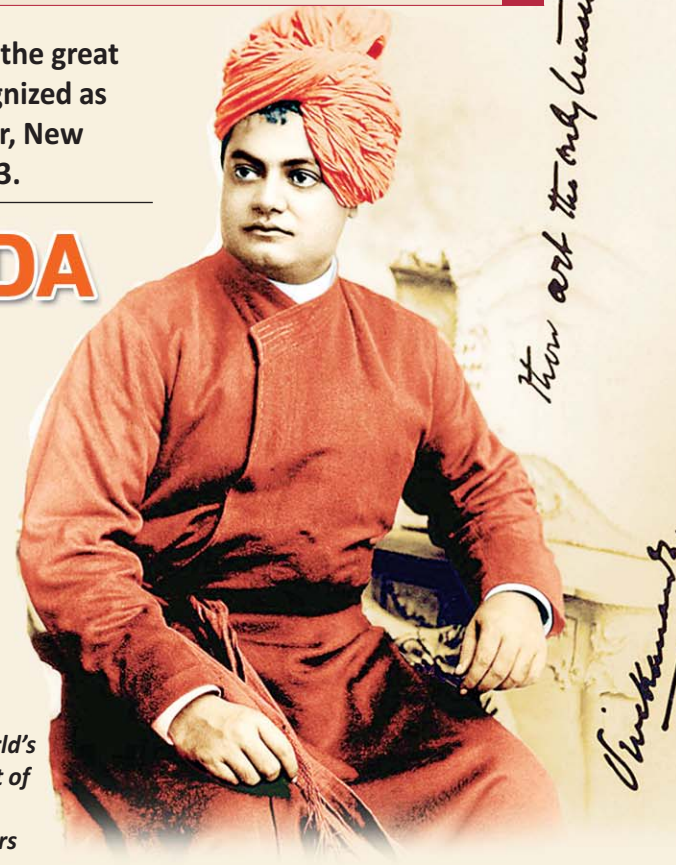
The Parliament was an adjunct of the World's Columbian Exposition, organized in Chicago to celebrate the 400th anniversary of the discovery of America by Columbus. One goal of the Exposition was to disseminate knowledge of progress in the world, especially in science and technology, that had been brought about by learned people in the West. Religion being an important aspect of human culture, it was decided to organize a Parliament of Religions. The Parliament marked the first concerted effort to get the representatives of all religions of the world to share their views. It commenced on September 11, 1893.

Here it is important to highlight the inherently human nature of Swami Vivekananda. He was initially seized with panic and fright when on stage at the massive Columbus Hall in Chicago, under the glare of seven thousand pairs of eyes from the hall below and the gallery above which were trained on him. Many had spoken before him from prepared speeches and the audience had applauded them politely. He seemed to have passed over several chances to speak. His attire and demeanor compelled people's attention. In his ochre robes and turban, this mag-

netic presence exuded strength.

When Swamiji rose to address the audience, he had no paper in his hand. The silence as he composed his thoughts was absolute; all breaths were hushed and faces turned eagerly towards him. And then, at last, he spoke. Surveying the gathering, he bowed his head and began with, 'Sisters and Brothers of America'. He could not proceed, thereafter, for the thunderous applause that followed his simple yet heartfelt greeting echoed through the columns of the Hall. When Swamiji resumed his speech after almost two minutes, he commanded everyone's attention as effortlessly as before. What is remarkable is that while representatives of other religions spoke of the greatness of their religions, Swamiji's message was Universal.

I quote to you some excerpts of his inaugural address: "I am proud to belong to a religion which has taught the world both tolerance and universal acceptance. We believe not only in universal toleration, but we accept all religions as true. I am proud to belong to a nation which has sheltered the persecuted and the refugees of all religions and all nations of the earth. The present convention, ...is in itself a vindication, a declaration to the world of the wonderful doctrine preached in the Gita: 'Whosoever comes to Me, through whatsoever form, I reach him; all men are struggling through paths which in the end lead to me.' Sectarianism, bigotry, and its horrible descendant, fanaticism, have long possessed this beautiful earth. They have filled the earth with violence, drenched it often and often with human blood, destroyed civilization and sent whole nations to despair. Had it not been for these horrible demons, human society would be far more advanced than it is now. But their time is come; and I



fervently hope that the bell that tolled this morning in honor of this convention may be the death-knell of all fanaticism, of all persecutions with the sword or with the pen, and of all uncharitable feelings between persons wending their way to the same goal."

His address at the final session on September 27, 1893 was no less spectacular in bringing out the essence of the philosophy of our land that all religions lead to the same God. He declared, "if anyone here hopes that this unity will come by the triumph of any one of the religions and the destruction of the others, I pity him from the bottom of my heart and point out to him that upon the banner of every religion will soon be written in spite of resistance: 'Help and not fight,' 'Assimilation and not Destruction,' 'Harmony and Peace and not Dissension.' Do I wish that the Christian would become Hindu? God forbid. Do I wish that the Hindu or Buddhist would become Christian? God forbid... But each must assimilate the spirit of the others and yet preserve his individuality and grow according to his own law of growth."

If the Parliament of Religions has shown anything to the world, it is this: It has proved to the world that holiness, purity and charity are not the exclusive possessions of any church in the world, and that every system has produced men and women of the most exalted character.

Following his debut address in Chicago the US dailies announced that his speech was the most popular one and he thus became known to all of America in one stroke. The Herald noted, "Vivekananda is undoubtedly the greatest figure in the Parliament of Religions. After hearing him, we feel how foolish it is to send missionaries to this learned nation."



Ambassador Sandeep Chakravorty is Consul General of India, New York.

By Dr I J Singh

I confess that I am addicted to political debate. The ethos encourages good governance for the benefit of the poorest of the poor and the neediest of the needy. In the exciting -- but trying reality -- of political passions and campaigns for the recent (2016) presidential elections in the United States, I caught a sane and balanced voice even though it was from the opposite side of the political spectrum than mine.

Talking about the "Republican circus" and its self-inflicted wounds, very quietly and tersely, Paul Ryan, the Republican Speaker of the House, made the case for rising above the fissiparous behavior of his own political party and focusing on the work necessary to unite Republicans for the 2016 general election and the task of governance.

(In the interest of full disclosure, I tell you that I have been absolutely dismissive of the Republican agenda both during the Bush years and their obstructive stance during the Obama years aimed at delegitimizing his presidency. I am not always a fan of Paul Ryan either.)

Ryan was being interviewed on the tube. He recommended that the post-primary period should highlight the open big tent that exhibits and welcomes the many shades of opinions that exist among Republicans. When challenged that, given the acute fissures and divisions among the hardcore Republicans, the dream of a unifying idea may be fiction and fantasy, he responded with what I thought was a surprisingly mature thought -- that the core requirement for unity is principles not practice.

And then my mind did a quick spin to the reality of Sikh institutions today: How they are structured, how they function and what we expect from them.

Let me try connecting the dots.

A couple of years ago I wrote an essay "The Big Tent" that looked at the expansive Sikh world as it exists today. I reasoned somewhat as follows:

The world sees Sikhi today as 'the new kids on the block', even though it has almost 25 million followers and is ranked as the fifth or sixth largest religion; definitely behind Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, and Christianity, but with its numerical ranking regarding Judaism open to debate in some quarters.

The exact hierarchy doesn't

Sikh Principles & Practices



Principles and practice are not always the same though both are critically important. Treasure the principles and help the practices play catch-up. It's an idea that's never been truer than in the world of religion.

matter for what I have in mind. I point out that, when we indulge in such rankings we count everyone and anyone who opts to be counted in; it becomes unnecessary then, if not undesirable, to sit in judgment of how good a Sikh he/she is and by what criteria.

That's the how and why of a very big inclusive tent.

Keep in mind that religious communities and centers exist for imperfect people who are on the path with varying degrees of success, sincerity, faith or understanding. We need to nurture the path, not diminish the follower. This is what transforms sinners into saints. Teach the principles and watch the practices take root and flower. That's the idea.

In that earlier essay I argued that in that big tent we should continue to make, as we do, space for those who are at the core of a religion like the amritdhari who lives the faith in every aspect of his/her life. The tent should also make room for one who is clearly and visibly less than perfect or is barely marginally connected to the faith. And where different faiths intersect in the society we will encounter some who are best dubbed fellow travelers or, heaven help us, some who run their life with a conveniently mixed bag of practices. This means that when the amritdhari is counted so is the sehajdhari, regardless of how that category is defined or measured. Also welcome then is the fellow traveler, who remains seriously undecided of where he belongs.

But what are the markers along the way that we need to keep our eye on? Again, my mind goes back to current political realities in the United States.

At center stage are concerns like the economy, economic inequality and economic opportunities; honesty and integrity of the electoral system, education and immigration; health care, racial and gender issues, defense, finally our place in this interconnected global world; more recently our globally dominant position seems to have slipped somewhat south.

How do our (Sikh) putative leaders (In USA / in Punjab) define the issues facing us; how do they design and propose solutions that fit the society in which we live and its structure? That's where and how the cookie crumbles.

An army of pollsters relentlessly poll the voting public. Ambitious leaders know their success depends on how acutely they connect with and listen to the people, articulate their frustrations and how well do they address their needs. The leaders exist less to command us and more, in fact, as servant-leaders. Polls and surveys inform the people and the leaders where matters stand.

Now think with me a moment. We probably have over a couple of hundred gurdwaras in North America. I would venture that most are at least somewhat dysfunctional or underperforming. This means to me that gurdwara managers and honchos either are clueless about our needs

and want or use the wrong tools to respond to our concerns.

You might wonder how I dare make such tall claims -- or accusations. Just look at gurdwara attendance and activities. Gurdwaras do not seem to function as academies of education where learning is at the center. And surely that should be their mandate. Most gurdwaras seem to run around two core functions: langar and as community social centers. I do not mean to minimize these two activities; they are essential. These two alone are necessary but not sufficient. There is more to a successful teaching and learning academy.

Let me offer some no-brainers.

There must be something missing in our design structure and expectations when we see how many gurdwaras have spent fortunes in litigation or institutional violence that necessitated the local police and the law to intervene.

At congregations, the menu at the langar attracts the most attention, and it is becoming increasingly more elaborate and mouthwatering by the day.

How many gurdwaras have a functioning library? The operative idea here is "functioning" and I haven't seen one yet.

Adolescents of both genders have effectively abandoned the place and the services in it. They seem to have no connection to, nor any understanding of, what goes on inside a gurdwara.

There is almost no connection between life outside the gurdwara in our neighborhoods or families with what is presented within the gurdwara. It is as if life inside a gurdwara and life outside of it are two entirely different entities that exist on different planets.

Yet the building and facilities are increasingly becoming more lavish, expensive, eye-catching, elaborate and expensive. What function do they really serve for life here on Earth except as much needed social centers, and then they may as well have entertainment and games like Bingo on the agenda as well? (In fact, a few gurdwaras do.)

Pretty much all gurdwaras have well-drafted "Constitutions" to manage the gurdwara. And

I have never seen one that honestly followed its own bye-laws.

In summary our connip-tions and shenanigans indicate that: 1.

Republications are not the only ones facing crises of identity and solidarity vs. devolving into

smithereens, 2. I point to a critical distinction in that we Sikhs have abiding faith in the Gurus but not a similar faith in the gurdwara or Sikhs, and 3. When a hammer is the only tool in your toolbox, every problem looks like a nail.

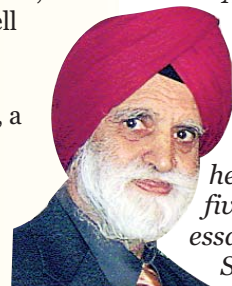
Clearly, a disconnect exists between what the gurdwara delivers and what the people need or want. I suggest that we take a lesson or two from the local political pundits and structures around us. These days every talking-head on the tube bases his recommendations on some polling data to recommend a direction to advance socio-political agenda. Have we ever thought of professionally polling Sikhs to explore what problems of living they face, especially outside the Punjabi and Indian cultural ambit? Have we ever looked for experts to design and conduct a poll or two, try some panel discussions, and then launch an exploratory program or two? Teaching ESL or even Punjabi, for instance, requires a different mindset than the skill to address issues of social isolation, domestic abuse or misuse of alcohol and drugs, etc.

Of course, we never think of such matters in our gurdwaras. Could we design a progressive curricular program and activity or is that too much to ask?

I like to think that religions are for imperfect people; so will their practices be. Keep this in mind while we embrace the principles. Never let go of them.

I assure you that in human history no institutions, whether they are nations or political parties, schools or hospitals, families or armies, effectively display or ever will perfect the practice of their principles. There are no exceptions to this rule. And the journey is the destination.

I(nder) J(it) Singh is Professor Emeritus of Anatomical Sciences at NYU. A prolific writer and speaker on his journey as a Sikh in America, he is the author of five collations of essays on Sikhs and Sikhi.



The word 'ahimsa' (nonviolence) and Gandhi have become synonymous and so known the world over.

Mahatma Gandhi touched and changed the lives of so many people in India and all over the world by advocating the peaceful pursuit of change. His nonviolent protest and constructive programs resonate today even after 70 years of his death. Gandhi continues to fascinate the world.

Historians, philosophers, politicians, economists and many others do research and pour out books in many languages at regular intervals exploring his life and personality and yet Gandhi remains for many an enigma. There are many aspects of Gandhi's philosophy and lifestyle which have widespread appeal to particular groups of people. His wish to be frugal in his demands on the natural ecosystem, in his food and clothing and other aspects of daily life has attracted much admiration. He has become a hero for the Green Movement. There are those who are persuaded by his vegetarianism either for reasons of avoiding harm to animals or just for health reasons.

INFLUENCE OF JAINISM

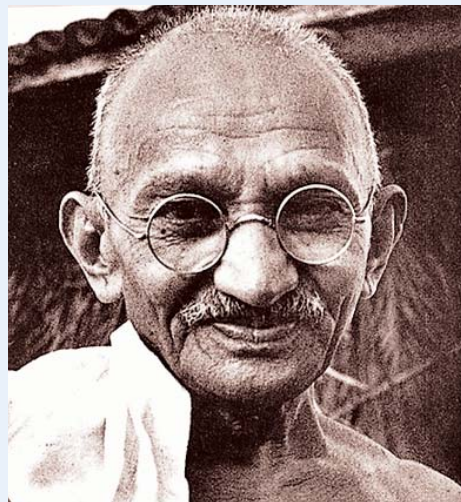
No one grows and develops in vacuum. Practically every person in the world is shaped by environment, circumstances, parents, customs, tradition, religions, and so was Gandhi. I firmly believe that in addition to the influence of Hinduism and Christianity, Jain connections and teachings during his formative years and later his experiences in South Africa made Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi into Mahatma Gandhi.

From his birth and up to his death, Gandhi came in close contact with a large number of Jains and Jain monks and scholars who influenced his thinking and molded his personality. He not only adopted the Jains' key principles of unconditional ahimsa and anekantavaad (multiplicity of views) but also 11 vows of conduct, pure vegetarian food habits.. Even his daily attire resembled that of a sthanakvasi Jain monk (2-3 pieces of white unstitched cloth) later in his life. During his entire life, Gandhi never compromised with ahimsa. After Jain propounder Bhagwan Mahavir's clarion call of ahimsa toward all living beings and later of Jesus Christ's adherence to ahimsa, Gandhi too emerged as the apostle of peace and nonviolence. So strong was his conviction that he said, "There are many causes I am willing to die for but not a single cause I am willing to kill for". Gandhi did give credit to Jainism when he said, "No religion of the world has explained the principle of nonviolence so deeply and systematically, with its applicability in life as in Jainism... Bhagwan Mahavir is sure to be respected as the greatest authority on non-violence".

GANDHI IN INDIA TODAY

Unfortunately as often is the case with many great men and women, their message is quickly forgotten and only their

Mahatma Gandhi continues to be relevant



name remains. Gandhi met a somewhat similar fate in the country of his birth. Once India gained independence, its leaders did not take long to abandon Mahatma Gandhi's principles. Nonviolence gave way to the use of India's armed forces. Perhaps even worse, the new leaders discarded Gandhi's vision of a decentralized society - a society based on autonomous, self-reliant villages. These leaders spurred a rush toward a strong central government and an

October 2nd, 2018 marked the start of yearlong celebration of Mahatma Gandhi's 150th birth anniversary and his message and devotion to nonviolence, for which he was influenced by Jainism.

By Dr. Sulekh C. Jain

Resolution Centers on many campuses. There are Gandhi statues in many large and small cities and films on Gandhi are shown frequently on national TV channels. I know of many scholars who have been producing videos on Gandhi in England, South Africa and India. Every year his birthday is celebrated with community programs. Gandhi continues to inspire people including Nobel Laureates, Peace Leaders and Human and Civil Rights activists such as Dr. Martin Luther King and Nelson Mandela.

In his many prominent speeches, for-



Inspired by his teachings, arts students of the Houston Community College painted a mural on Gandhi and converted an abandoned park into a place of attraction.

industrial economy as found in the West.

In 1969 when the world was celebrating 100th birth anniversary of this great soul, BBC interviewed some students of Delhi University and asked what Gandhi meant to them. They retorted, "Gandhi who?" The politicians still parrot his name only to get votes.

GANDHI IN THE WEST TODAY

I have found much more awareness and respect for Gandhi in the West. His name is well known among educated people. Many schools, universities and churches offer courses, classes and workshops on Gandhi and his message. There are several Ahimsa Centers, Mahatma Gandhi Libraries, Museums, Peace and Conflict

not yield to power, and would triumph over the Empire that opposed him.

For more than 20 years I lived in Houston where there is statue of Gandhi in a prominent park, and the community celebrates his birthday every year with city-wide activities.

Prof Allen Douglas of University of Maine in USA recently wrote, "Gandhi carried on his mission and projects with great motivation, perseverance, incredible energy, remarkable fearlessness and courage, and nonviolent transforming, practical effectiveness. Gandhi's essential teachings and practices of ahimsa are not only relevant and significant today, but they are more urgently needed than during his lifetime".

From the central hall of the Indian Parliament in New Delhi to a statue at Union Square Park in New York, and across far flung corners of the world, M. K. Gandhi is loved and celebrated as an apostle of non-violence. Yet it is Gandhi's little-known work on what it means to be truly civilized that might be far more crucial to the future of our species. Gandhi has 21st century Appeal and relevance

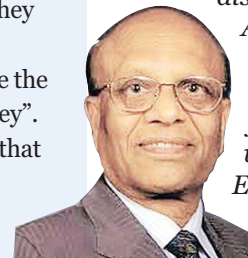
CAUTION

In 1950s Sir Richard Attenborough of UK (who made an Oscar winning movie 'Gandhi') met Jawahar Lal Nehru, the then Prime Minister of India and said that he wants to produce a feature film on Gandhi. Nehru said to him, "Make it very quickly before people start worshipping him". Nehru knew that once people start worshipping anyone, the message is lost and only the glory, statues and miracles remain. Therefore, it is important that we do not deify or worship Gandhi as the superhuman Mahatma who provides us with the exclusive, absolute, nonviolent truth. He was an extraordinary human being, yet a human. It is important that we approach Gandhi in ways that contextualize his ahimsa message, values and practices so that they are integrally related to the crises and realities of contemporary world. Gandhi offers us an insightful ahimsa view of ethical, spiritual, and cosmic evolution and ways of tapping into our higher nonviolent human nature.

In today's world the need and cry for peace is even more than ever. The life and teachings of Mahatma Gandhi as an apostle of peace and nonviolence is a beacon of hope and inspiration to millions of people around the world.

Dr. Sulekh C. Jain is the Past Secretary and President of the Federation of Jain Associations in North America (JAINA). Dr. Jain also authored a book An

Ahimsa Crisis: You Decide, which can be accessed as an eBook free of charge at www.isjs.in Email: scjain@earthlink.net

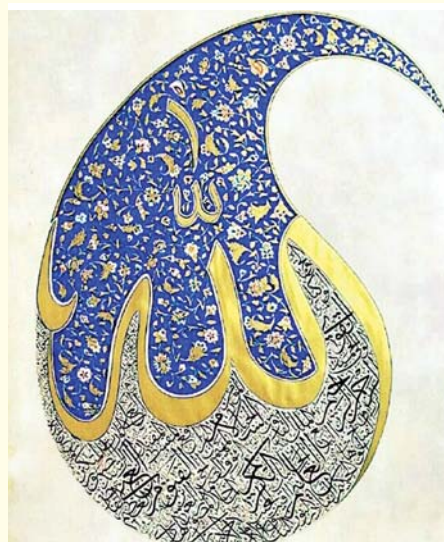


Islam is a monotheistic religion like Judaism and Christianity, and like those religions, it teaches that God created the whole universe and everything in it. God is the master designer who put order and purpose in his creation, and he rules over it with compassion and mercy. Everything in creation depends upon God, the Sustainer, for its existence. The purpose of all creation, including humans, is to love and serve God.

The very name of the religion, Islam, means submission or obedience to God, and the Muslim is one who submits or surrenders to God and recognizes Muhammad as God's prophet. All created things fulfill their assigned purpose by serving God. Everything in nature, by acting according to its design, serves God's will. In a sense, the whole universe is Muslim because it surrenders to the divine purpose.

OPENING CHAPTER OF THE HOLY QURAN

1. In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.
2. Praise be to Allah, the Cherisher and Sustainer of the worlds;
3. Most Gracious, Most Merciful
4. Master of the Day of Judgment
5. Thee do we worship, and---Thine aid we seek
6. Show us the straight path,
7. The path of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy blessings, those who have not incurred Thy displeasure, and those who have



Allah in calligraphy art

not gone astray.

Islam teaches that God created humans from clay and breathed the spirit of life into them. He separated them from the rest of creation by giving them three divine gifts: intelligence to distinguish the true from the false, a will that can freely choose between them, and the power of speech to worship. Because of these gifts, people are the noblest of God's creatures, superior to the rest of nature. However, people are

not perfect.

Although not sinful by nature, humans are vulnerable to temptation. Because they are rebellious and proud, they often forget that they are dependent on God.

The Quran stresses the mercy and compassion of God, and the words "merciful" (rahmah) and "compassionate" (rahim) come from the same root, rahma, which carries the meaning of forgiveness, and abundant mercy that sustains, protects, and rewards. Because He is the sustainer and protector, God has created a well-regulated and ordered universe in which night regularly follows day so that creatures may rest, and the sun and moon follow predictable patterns, creating seasons so that humans may cultivate plants for food. God also provided animals to assist humans in fulfilling their needs for warmth and food. Those who remember this fulfill their purpose by worshiping and serving Him as stewards of His creation.

What does it mean to serve God, according to Islam? The answer lies in God's books of prophecy. God gave his revelation through the prophets, so that humans may know how to fulfill their purpose as God's

agents on earth. They are to assist in realizing God's will for all of creation. In their desire to understand God's plan, most people benefit from God's guidance, which is why God sent prophets. God gave humans the Quran and the law, and together, they are the guide to a peaceful life. Put simply, humans serve God by doing good deeds, telling the truth, and obeying God's instructions contained in the Quran and the law. They serve the underserved. They feed the poor and care for orphans. They are faithful, and when they sin, they seek forgiveness with sincere remorse.

As in Judaism and Christianity, simply following the way of Islam is its own reward.

By following the path revealed by God, Muslims live in harmony with God and with all of creation. This brings the great blessings of peace and happiness in life. Those who live according to God's design will find wealth and success, and they will be respected in their communities, because they will always choose the right way. Not only will they be blessed by God, they will be a source of blessing to those who know them.

The Ultimate Reality in Islam

Submission to God lies at the very heart of Islam. The word islam means "surrender," or "submission," or "peace," and the fundamental meaning of Islam is "surrender to God." One who surrenders to God and recognizes Muhammad as God's prophet is a Muslim. Arabic is the language of the first Muslims and of the Quran, and in Arabic, the word for God is Allah, or "The God." Arabic-speaking Christians also use "Allah" when speaking of God and praying to God. Islam teaches that Allah is the same God worshipped by Jews and Christians.

For Muslims, the Quran is the most important source of knowledge about God. In a popular verse called the "Throne Verse" (surah 2:255), the Quran describes God in this way:

"God, there is no god but



Submission to God lies at the very heart of Islam.

He, the living, the self-subsistent. Slumber takes Him not, nor sleep. His is what is in the heavens and what is in the earth. Who is it that intercedes with Him save by His permission? He knows what is before them and what behind them, and they comprehend not aught of His knowledge but of what

He pleases. His throne extends over the heavens and the earth, and it tires Him not to guard them both, for He is high and grand."

The Quran describes God as the creator and ruler of all things, and the judge of all things. He is all-powerful, all-knowing, merciful, and compassionate. He is eter-

nal. He is master of all things in the universe, and guides humans through his prophets who are bearers of his word, such as Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and lastly, Muhammad. God sent his prophets to create communities chosen for a special relationship with him, including Jews and Christians. They are known as the People of the Book, because they accept God's revelation as it has been recorded in scripture. On the day the world ends, the Day of Judgment, God will resurrect the dead and every person will be judged for his or her deeds. Each person's good deeds will be balanced with the bad deeds. Those whose good deeds outweigh their bad deeds will live forever in paradise, while those whose bad deeds outweigh the good will be condemned to eternal fire. Intentions,

and not just deeds, are also used in the equation for judgment. Good deeds carry a significantly higher value than bad deeds; they are worth more in God's eyes.

Islam emphasizes that God is perfectly one. He was not created by any other being, nor has he had any offspring. He is completely unique, completely transcendent, and nothing compares to him. The basic statement of faith for all Muslims begins, "La ilaha ila Allah" (There is no God but Allah). There are no other gods, no other divine beings, nothing to associate with God or compete with him. Islam does believe in angels, including wicked angels with Satan as their leader, but they are creatures of God, created just as humans are. People and jinn are intelligent beings, people created out of clay and jinn created from smokeless flames. Angels, created out of light, are not intelligent beings in Islam.

Source: pathoes.com

The Meaning of Sukkot and its Tradition

Culminating the high holy days is a period of celebration that is unique to Jewish tradition called Sukkot. During Rosh Hashanah the Jew is to reflect and focus on deeds and sins of the year and affirm that the sins will not be revisited. After Rosh Hashanah comes Yom Kippur. This is when all creation is judged and sealed in the book of life. These are festivals of intrinsic power that drain and change the Jew. However, we are not left to begin the New Year with fatigue and concern. We mark the high holy days as the entry point of the new year, 5779, in celebration. We celebrate with the harvest being the harbinger of the New Year and by affirming we will refine ourselves in study and deed. We are commanded to celebrate the harvest and a new year by building a structure called the Sukkah. During Sukkot, we are to leave our comfy home (except for rainy days) and live in the sukkah for seven days.

The sukkah needs to have at least 3 sides and a sktoch of natural fibers on the roof.

There are

By Lawrence Spiro

many regulations and traditions that need to be addressed otherwise it isn't kosher. Most important is the "roof." The roof needs to be laid down, not affixed, and you must be able to see the stars at night.

The joy of being in the sukkah is accompanied by another "mitzvah" or commandment. Once a day, while in the Sukkah, you hold a fruit (etrog) and natural branches (lulav) and wave them in a synchronized way. In the sukkah everything is choreographed. The etrog and lulav are held a certain way then held another way. Custom has it to wave between 5 to 7 times in all directions. North, south, up, down, east, West, and back once or twice shaking the lulav and etrog 2 or 3 times in every direction, and then returning to your heart. There is a beautiful Midrash or analogy attached to the tradition.

1. The *lulav* (date tree frond), which has a sweet taste (dates) but no particular smell, represents the Jewish scholar who is dedi-



Once a day, while in the Sukkah, you hold a fruit (etrog) and natural branches (lulav) and wave them in a synchronized way.

cated to internalizing knowledge (taste) but does not excel in performing good deeds.

2. The *hadas* (myrtle branch), which has a pleasant smell and no taste, represents the one who is outstanding in performance of good deeds, - like a "good smell", but lacks outstanding Torah scholarship.
3. The *etrog* (citrus fruit), which has both a good taste and a good smell, rep-



This is the sukkah the Spiro family erected. Jews are commanded to celebrate the harvest and a new year by building a structure called the Sukkah and during Sukkot live in there for seven days.

resents one that excels both in Torah study as well as in good deeds.

4. The *aravah* (willow branch), which has no special smell or taste, represents the person who does not excel in study or good deeds for whatever reason. However when the Etrog and lulav are brought together it is a symbol that all people are G-d's children and our achievement is to embrace all of humanity out of love for G-d.

My family built a sukkah this year. It was nice to sit and look up at the stars through the sktoch. We had many meals and discussions there.

When I looked back at my house I saw a building of roof, tar and wood. I saw the lights on and the modern conveniences of the day ready to serve, but I enjoyed being out-

side looking in. When I am with my family in the sukkah I realize that my home is where we sit and exchange our feelings for each other, sometimes with words or looks or silence.

The walls and roof of the sukkah are temporary, but the feeling of belonging, love and home are permanent, and the location is of little matter. This is the message of sukkot, the time to rejoice, harvest, and embrace each other.

Lawrence Spiro is a published poet and writer. He is CFO of Vitaco, Inc., DBA Healthquest Vitamins. He holds a BA in English and MA in Industrial Management. He and his wife and children reside in Syosset, New York.

What Is a Kippah (Yarmulke)

Kippah (literally: dome) is the Hebrew word for skullcap, also referred to in Yiddish as a yarmulke, or less frequently as a koppel.

Jewish law requires men to cover their heads as a sign of respect and reverence for G-d when praying, studying Torah, saying a blessing or entering a synagogue.

This practice has its roots in biblical times, when the priests in the Temple were instructed to cover their heads.

Traditionally, Jewish men and boys wear the

kippah at all times, a symbol of their awareness of, and submission to, a "higher" entity.

Although it is not explicitly required by law, the practice is noted in the Talmud, and through the ages, this became an accepted Jewish custom to the point that according to the majority of halachic authorities, it is mandatory.

One should, therefore, not walk or even sit, bareheaded. Small children should also be taught to cover their heads.

Aside from the common black kippah, many wear it in various colors or designs. Some communities have developed kippah designs that are highly intricate works of art, such as those made by Jewish artisans from Yemen and Georgia, most of whom now live in Israel.

The Menorah

The menorah is described in the Bible as the seven-lamp (six branches) ancient Hebrew lampstand made of pure gold and used in the portable sanctuary set up by Moses in the wilderness and later in the Temple in Jerusalem. The menorah has been a symbol of Judaism since ancient times and is the emblem on the coat of arms of the modern state of Israel. According to Wikipedia, the menorah symbolized the ideal of universal enlightenment. The idea that the menorah symbolizes wisdom is noted in the Talmud, for example, in the following: "Rabbi Isaac said: He who desires to become wise should incline to the south [when praying]. The symbol [by which to remember this] is that... the Menorah was on the southern side [of the Temple]."

The seven lamps allude to the branches of human knowledge, represented by the six lamps inclined inwards towards, and symbolically guided by, the light of God represented by the central lamp. The menorah also symbolizes the creation in seven days, with the center light representing the Sabbath.



This decorated velvet kippah (yarmulke) is popular among contemporary Jewish boys.

How fake news distorts & hurts

By **Khalid Lateef**

Those who can make you believe absurdities; can make you commit atrocities.

-Voltaire

The Interfaith Institute of Islamic Center of Long Island (ICLI) in Westbury, NY held a seminar titled 'What's at Stake if News is Fake?' on September 16. The conference room was filled to capacity with people of various religions and cultures.

The Keynote Speaker for the conference was Howard Schneider, visionary editor and educator. The Moderator was Bob Keeler, Pulitzer Prize winning journalist and author. There were two Guest Panelists: Werner Reich, a retired industrial engineer, who is a Holocaust survivor and frequent anti-bias speaker; and Daisy Khan, author and Founder/Executive Director of Women's Islamic Initiative for Spirituality and Equality (WISE) They were all introduced by Dr. Faroque Khan, Chairman of the Interfaith Institute (IFI).

Howard Schneider pointed out that we are living in the second Information Revolution; not since the invention of the printing press over 450 years ago has so much information been available to every person around the globe. The latest developments of the computer, internet, cellular/smartphones, Facebook, Twitter, etc. has made it possible to create, dis-



(From left) Daisy Khan, Werner Reich and Howard Schneider, who spoke at the seminar.

tribute, and receive information instantly. Therefore, we all need to become more "educated" on how to navigate through all of the potential misleading, untrue, false information. He underlined that reliable news has three things: A system of verification, it is independent and has accountability. He has developed a course and a "Center for News Literacy" at Stony Brook University (<http://drc.centerfornewsliteracy.org>)

Werner Reich spoke about the use of Fake News by the German Government under the Nazis against the Jews. Imagine even today there are people who deny there was ever a Jewish Holocaust. He said Fake News came in the form of portraying Jews as the "enemy" of the German people and the cause of their problems; this was done gradually over time. They got away with it because few people spoke out against the Nazi propaganda. He explained how the Nazi government used to deny the

conditions in the Concentration Camps. And, before outside agencies were allowed in to review conditions at a Camp, the sick and severely malnourished were stuffed in cattle cars and shipped to other Camps to be gassed and burned in ovens. He also talked about the book called "The Protocols"; its full title is "The Protocols of the Meeting of the Learned Elders of Zion". The book proposes that there is a worldwide scheme; agreement among Jews to control the world. The text of the book was first fabricated in 1903 in Russia, but it is still believed and circulated today among anti-Jewish hate groups as the truth.

Daisy Khan's presentation dealt with Fake News in the form of distortion of facts and the lack of equal access to mainstream media news for Muslims. She shared the fact that she worked, lived, worshiped and socialized in the area that was damaged and destroyed on 9/11. Before 9/11

she had a history of good happenings and good memories attached to that area. The terror attack affected her emotionally; she experienced a great loss. She felt it was her responsibility as a Muslim to let everyone know that the individuals that would do such a terrible thing did not represent Islam as practiced by Prophet Mohammed. She went on to point out that top Muslim scholars and leaders from around the world produced and put their names to a document that stated how the terrorists violated the principles of Islam, the teachings of Prophet Mohammed; and that Muslims should give them no support. However, when a press conference was called to share that document with America and the world, the American mainstream media didn't show up.

As an example of sensationalism and distortion of facts, she cited the issue of the "9/11 Mosque". Many papers and TV channels reported that Muslims were planning to build a mosque in the area of the downed Towers. The story was totally false: The area proposed was not on any of the Towers' footprints and the proposal was not for a mosque – it was for a community center, like a YMCA, with programs for all ages, including senior citizens. The lie of a "9/11 Mosque" was thoroughly covered by the media, but the true facts got very little airing.

There was also the story of Mohammad Salman Hamdani, a 23-year-old Pakistani American NYPD cadet and Emergency Medical Technician. He went to the World Trade Center to help and was killed when the towers came down. The initial reports that he was suspected of being tied to the terrorists got front page treatment. But when he was finally recognized as one of the heroes of 9/11 by the New York City mayor and the police commissioner, that was barely noticed.

At the seminar, the presence of Darshan Singh Bagga, Sikh community leader and publisher of One World Under God, was noted. The Interfaith Institute of ICLI support his efforts to bring people of different races, cultures and religions together in peace.

In the Holy Quran, Chapter 103, it reads, "In the name of God, the Beneficent, the Merciful. By the signs of time through the Ages, verily Man is in loss, except such as have Faith, and do righteous deeds, and join together in the mutual teaching of Truth, patience and constancy."

The IFI is dedicated to joining with other people of faith to spread the truth and be in constant fellowship with all people of faith and goodwill.

Submitted on behalf of The Interfaith Institute. For information call 516.434.0313 or E-mail:

Faroquekhan@outlook.com

Gandhi 150 kicked off in Long Island by Shanti Fund

By **Arvind Vora**

For Volunteers of Shanti Fund, this year is significant. They launched 'Gandhi -150' at Huntington Town Hall on September 7 in the presence of American and Indian dignitaries as well as Indian American community leaders. Mahatma Gandhi was born on October 2, 1869 and we have launched a yearlong celebration, culminating on October 2, 2019.

The year 2019 will also be the 20th anniversary of unveiling of a lifesize Gandhi statue of bronze at the H. Lee Dennison Building in Hauppauge, NY, the Suffolk County Executive building. The statue was a gift from Indian Americans on Long Island and was made by a US sculptor.

Philosophically, as a world



(from left) Deepa Panchal leading the song *Vaishnav Janah Toh Tene...*, Pragna Patel, Tejal Raval, Gopi Udeshi and Sucheta Naik. Jigar Shah dressed as Gandhi

leader on many fronts, America aspires to be No. 1 in every field. Two things US admires about India is Mahatma Gandhi and diversity. Gandhi for a nonviolent overthrow of the most powerful empire - the Great Britain. America had to undertake a bloody war in 1770's to gain independence

from the same empire. America can relate to Boston Tea Party and Gandhi Salt March.

USPS released a Diwali (a festival for Hindus, Jains, Sikhs and Buddhists albeit for different reasons) Forever stamp in 2016 after a decade long campaign by Indian Americans. On the other hand,

in 1961 USPS on its own issued two stamps to honor Gandhi.

As to diversity in religions, language, culture, etc., India is unprecedented in scope and magnitude.

Gandhi became more spiritual after his intellectual curiosities were satisfied, thanks to westerners, upon reading Hindu scriptures and the Bible. He had four spiritual mentors - by reading, corresponding or meeting them in person. They are: Ruskin, Thoreau, Tolstoy and Rajchandra Ravjibhai Mehta. The last one a Jain scholar helped Gandhi to finetune and understand intricacies of non-violence. Ahimsa (nonviolence) is a pillar of Jainism and peace is a byproduct.

Gandhi's devotional song was 'Vaishnava Janah Toh Tene Re Kahiye..' (an ideal per-

son is one who feels the pain of others) in Gujarati language. As part of the Gandhi - 150, Government of India has got this song recorded in most every language. In USA, the Consulate General of India, NY and Shanti Fund collaborated to have it sung by Chaka Khan (10 Grammys and 70 million record sales) and Bollywood singer Sonu Nigam. It is available on YouTube.

For Shanti Fund, it has been a tradition to begin Gandhi events with this song. This October 2, a young boy, named Jigar Shah, shaved his head and came in the signature attire of Gandhi Ji. He stole everyone's heart.

Arvind Vora is a key Volunteer of Shanti Fund and Chairman of Long Island Multi Faith Forum.

The planet's biggest pillar-less dome, built without a professional architect's design, housing 54 massive bronze statues of some of the greatest leaders of humanity as a mega monument to world peace, has come up in Pune.

It was inaugurated by Vice President M. Venkaiah Naidu at the Maharashtra Institute of Technology (MIT) here on Oct. 2, the birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi.

At its inauguration, Naidu said the structure is a "monumental addition to the thoughts propagated by the great saints of Maharashtra."

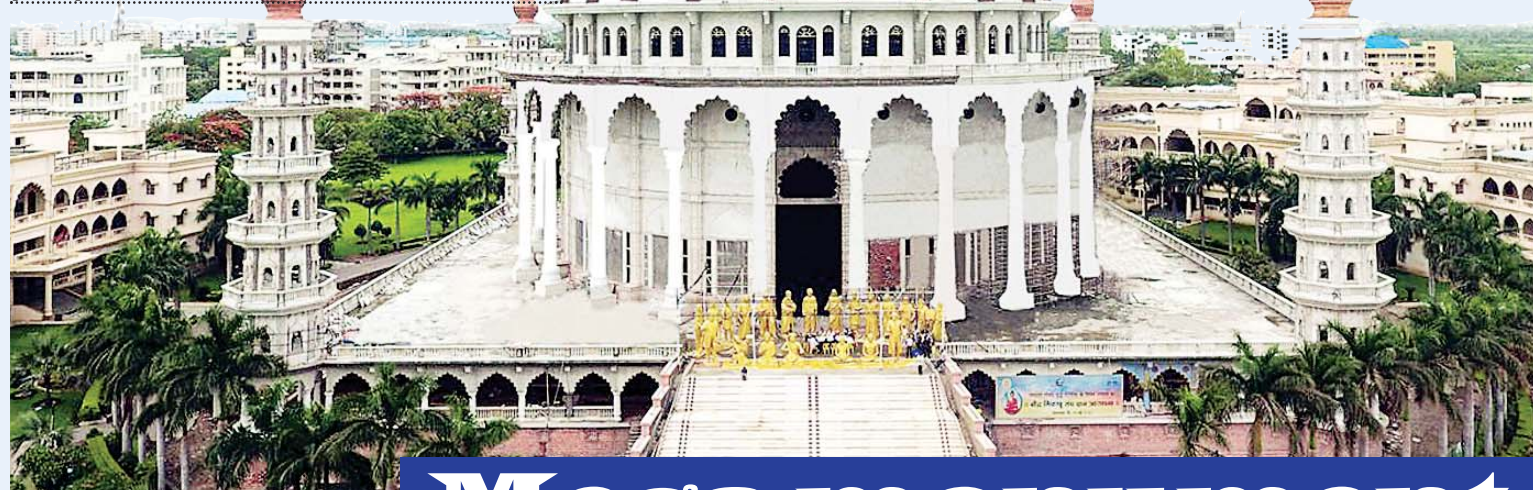
Saying that Indian ethos comprises "mutual respect and peaceful coexistence," Naidu added: "I pray that this dome, which symbolizes harmony and peace is able to inspire a sense of unity and humanity in every single person who enters its premises." The inauguration of the Saint Dnyaneshwara World Peace Prayer Hall and Library, or the World Peace Monument to mankind was followed by a four-day World Parliament on topics spanning the spiritual and scientific realms with over 100 speakers and thousands of delegates from around the world. The project is the outcome of 13 years of sheer dedication and untiring efforts against all odds by a teacher, Dr. Vishwanath Karad, who was inspired by the teachings of apostles, saints, philosophers and scientists down the ages.

The World Peace Monument dome has a diameter of 160 feet, compared with the Vatican Dome's 139.6 feet, and stands 263 feet tall with a bell hanging from the centre, and the prayer hall is of around 30,000 sq ft.

At the periphery of the dome and underneath -- inside and outside -- stand imposing bronze statues of 54 of the biggest names in world history, irrespective of nationality or religion.

Among the statues are: Gautam Buddha, Jesus Christ,

Inaugurated by Indian Vice President Venkaiah Naidu on Gandhi's birthday in Pune, it houses 54 massive bronzes of prophets, saints and scientists.



The World Peace Monument has a diameter of 160 feet and stands 263 feet tall, making it the biggest pillar-less dome in the world.

Mahavir, Moses, Guru Nanak and Mahatma Gandhi; intellectual giants like Confucius, Adi Shankaracharya, Aristotle, Aryabhatta, Socrates, Plato, Galileo and Copernicus; philosopher-saints like Dnyaneshwara, Tukaram, Bulleh Shah, Francis D'Assisi, Peter, Mother Teresa and Kabir; and scientists like Einstein, Edison, C.V. Raman, Jagadish Chandra Bose and Marie Curie.

The statues -- weighing up to two tonnes and up to four meters tall -- have been painstakingly crafted by the renowned 93-year old artist, Ram V. Sutar, and inaugurated in phases since August 15 by eminent Indian personalities.

"The top of the dome here comprises another world first -- a temple of Goddess Saraswati, symbolizing knowledge -- and embodying the underlying spirit behind this entire monument, which is accessible by a massive stairway," Karad said.

Hailing from a peasant family, Karad, 77, is the Founder-President of the MIT World Peace University besides MAEER's MIT and Director General of World Peace Centre,

Mega monument to world peace opens in India



Dr. Vishwanath Karad, the man behind the project, has been inspired by the teachings of apostles, saints, philosophers and scientists down the ages.

all in Pune.

As a teenager, Karad once went to a bookstore in Pune and happened to see a book by Swami Vivekananda. "His words created a deep impact on me; I went on to read the preachings of Sant Dnyaneshwara and Sant



The roof of the prayer hall has symbols of all major world religions.

Tukaram, among many others, and realized that they were some of the most amazing philosophers," Karad reminisced. The entire dome complex is on the property formerly owned by the Bollywood showman Raj Kapoor, along with his imposing memorial, & on the other side is a music school run by the renowned Mangeshkar family. Humility personified, Karad dismisses all credit, saying the

monument just happened with him acting as "an instrument" with Saint Dnyaneshwara's blessings, & with the help of several hundreds of artisans from Rajasthan and other places toiling. "The world is one family -- 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam' -- which is an ancient Indian concept. My humble attempt is to create an edifice befitting the glory of Mother India," Karad said.



The prophets and saints statues include Jesus Christ, Moses, Shri Rama, and Bulle Shah (to represent Islam) as well as (not pictured) Guru Nanak and Mahavir.

Right livelihood, right prayer

Three wisdom stories from the life of Guru Nanak, founder of Sikhism.

When milk & blood oozed out of bread

Guru Nanak used to travel all over on foot with his companions Bala and Mardana.

Wherever they went, they made beautiful music to help people understand God and spread truth. One day they were visiting a remote village in Northern

India. People there had heard the news and were excited that Baba Nanak was coming. Lalo, a simple and hard-working carpenter, ran out to meet him. Wanting to serve him, he fell at Guru Nanak's feet, saying, "O Baba Ji, my soul is honored to see your divine presence. Please come to my house so I can serve you."

Guru Nanak agreed to Lalo's pure request and went to his modest home. He and his companions ate the simple

food offered, which was made with love. The family felt blessed to have had a saint like Guru Nanak in their house.

In the same village lived a very rich man named Malik Bhago. He was the governor of the area. He didn't treat people very nicely but every year he organized a huge festival to please God. He too sent a messenger to Guru Nanak to invite him to a feast at his home. Reluctantly, Guru Ji went to

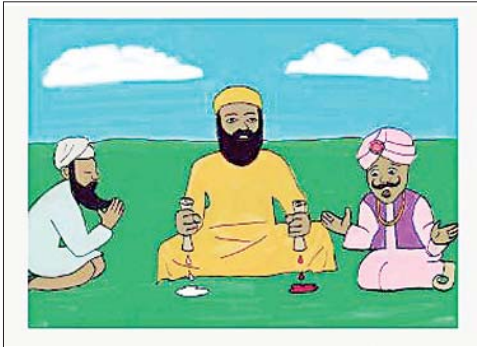
Malik Bhago's house. He didn't eat anything, instead just sat by himself meditating. Malik Bhago was offended. Angrily, he asked, "Baba, why haven't you eaten any of this food? You can eat at the house of a low caste carpenter but not my food? It is the most exotic, expensive, rich food you

can get, why won't you eat it?"

Guru Nanak replied, "I will show you why." He asked someone to go to Lalo's house and bring back some food. Guru Ji took a chapati from Lalo's house in one of his hands. In his other hand, he took some fancy bread from Malik Bhago's feast. He began squeezing the food in both hands and something amazing happened. Out of the Lalo's, milk came out! It was a miracle. But out of Malik Bhago's bread came blood. Everyone was shocked.

Guru Ji explained: "Lalo works and earns honestly. His wife cooked the food with love and they served it with kindness and devotion." Lalo's food was like milk to a saint. Guru Nanak continued, "Your servants made the food with fear. They are afraid of what will happen if they do anything wrong and angry at you for treating them like you do." So Malik Bhago's food was like blood. "Only food that is made with love is truly good for the body."

Malik Bhago learned a great lesson that day and became a follower of Guru Nanak's.



Nanak waters his farms from afar

During his travels far and wide, Guru Nanak made his way to a sacred place, called Haridwar ("Gate to God") by the side of Ganges river. Huge crowds of people had gathered there. They were chanting and

praying, led by the priests. People were offering water towards the morning sun to honor deceased people in their families. Guru Nanak too went into the river and began throwing water in the westerly direction.

A crowd gathered to see this crazy man. Obviously he didn't know what he was doing! A Brahmin said, "Foolish man! Who has taught you to do such a strange thing?" Another one chimed in, "Why on earth are you throwing water the wrong way?"

Guru Nanak looked at the Brahmin and asked, "Why do you throw water to the sun?" The priest said proudly,

"To honor our ancestors, it gives them happiness, blessings and prosperity." "So, how far away are your ancestors?" asked the Guru. Overhearing the conversation, a man, who had read a lot of books and thought he had the right

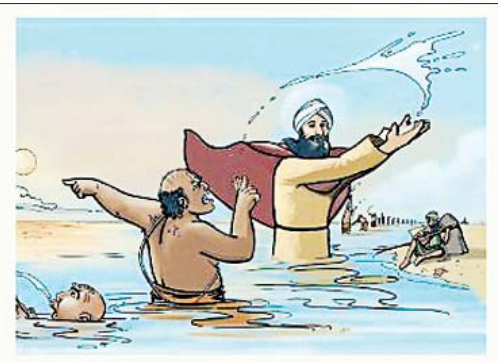
answers to everything, butted in, "Our ancestors live thousands and thousands of miles away."

Now, the Guru started throwing more and more water, faster and

faster, in the direction away from the sun. The Brahmins yelled, "STOP, STOP, what are you doing?"

Guru Nanak, with a straight face, told them, "I have a farm in Punjab, which is in that direction. My fields really need water, especially at this time of year. If I don't get this water over to them, my crops might dry up!"

Now those gathered really thought he was totally crazy. One of them



The boulder with Nanak's hand print

Guru Nanak Dev Ji used to travel on foot everywhere with his companions and musicians, Bala and Mardana. One day they were walking in hot weather and Mardana felt very thirsty. Finally they reached a hill with a dwelling at the top. They were sure they would be able to get water there. The man who lived there had a well from which everyone in the nearby village drew water for their needs. But he was very

greedy and charged money before anyone could use the well.

Mardana too approached the man, "Can I have some water? My

friends and I are

very thirsty." The man replied curtly, "You have to pay." Mardana said, "We don't have any money sir, we just need water." The well owner stuck to his demand.

Guru Nanak told Mardana to go back again and ask for water in the name of God. In vain, again.

Now more than before, Guru Nanak, Bala and Mardana were all very thirsty and hot. So the Guru sat down and said, "Don't worry. God always takes care of us." He found a small stick and dug it in the ground.

And a miracle happened: a spring of pure, clear, refreshing water came up. The trio felt relieved as they drank their fill of the delicious spring water and felt refreshed. Others from the village saw what had happened and joyfully joined them in using some of the fresh spring water.

The greedy man had been watching all this from the top of the hill. He peered into his own well and realized it was drying up. The water was going from his well to the spring at the bottom of the hill where all the people had gathered around Guru Nanak and his companions. In his fury, he spotted a huge boulder nearby and had an idea to crush Guru Nanak. He mustered all his might, and managed to roll the boulder over the hill, down towards Guru Nanak and the people near the spring. The boulder rolled down the hill, gaining speed. The scared villagers rushed out of the way. But not Guru Nanak, who was now sitting peacefully in meditation. The huge boulder was headed right for him, ready to run him over and even kill him.

Mardana cried, "Guru Ji, please get out of the way, the boulder is coming right for you!" But Guru Nanak did not even open his eyes. He calmly reached one hand out. The huge rock met with Guru Nanak's hand and stopped right in its place. His hand left an imprint in the hard stone as if it was made out of soft clay. The greedy man also saw the miracle and realized that what he had done was terrible and ran down to ask forgiveness. He bowed to the Guru and begged to be taught how to live in a more spiritual way. He had realized whatever God made was meant to be shared and dedicated his life to sharing with others and teaching them to share.





By Sant Rajinder
Singh Ji Maharaj

Sant Rajinder Singh Ji Maharaj is one of the world's most highly regarded and distinguished Masters of meditation. As the current spiritual leader of Science of Spirituality/Sawan Kirpal Ruhani Mission, he tours the world year round presenting his powerful, yet simple meditation technique to millions of people in 5 continents and over 20 countries.

From childhood, our life is a series of activities that occupy our time. Parents create a schedule for their infants and toddlers. As children, our life becomes a regiment of one activity after another. In school, we rush about to reach classes on our schedule. When we graduate, we take a job and we have a list of tasks to do. It seems our whole life is occupied in one activity after another. Thus,

Being Active and Being Still

when we try to meditate, we find it almost unnatural to sit still and still our mind.

As a society we seem to value activity. The more we are seen doing, the better it looks. Few people value sitting in silence. We think that if we sit still, we are not doing anything. We fear being labeled as lazy or incompetent. However, each person needs to take time from all their busy activities and be still.

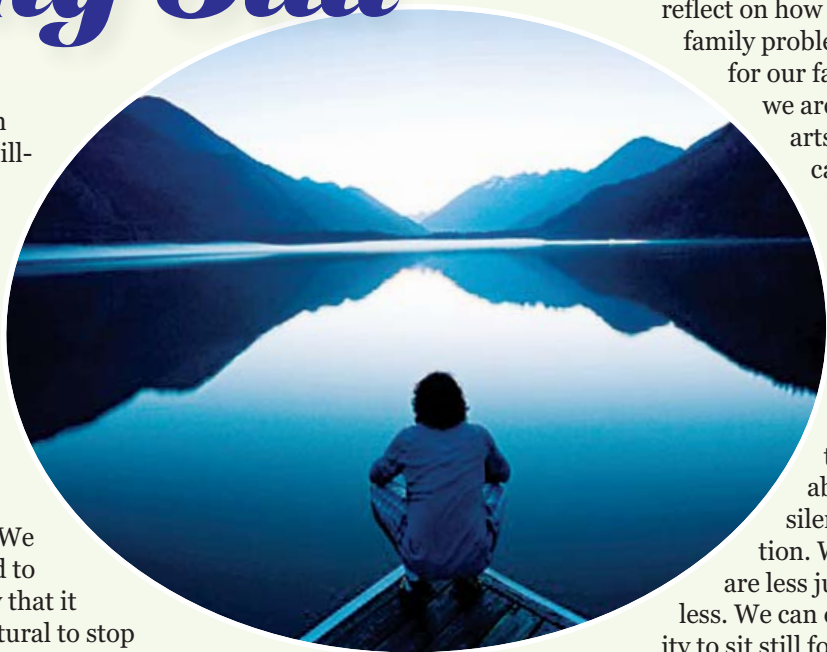
Being still has many purposes. It is in stillness that we come up with creative ideas. It is in stillness that we solve a difficult problem. It is in stillness that we have revelations. Scientists, musicians, artists, poets, writers, philosophers, and inventors often came up with masterpieces by sitting in stillness. From the stillness arose new ideas that revolutionized the world.

Similarly, stillness is where we find our soul and God. God cannot be found by outer activity; God can only be found

within. Meditation requires stillness for attaining spiritual results.

Our life is like a train rushing along tracks of busyness. We are so used to being busy that it feels unnatural to stop our activities to sit in silence. Yet to solve a problem or create something new, we need to take time from our busy schedule to tap into our inner resources. Similarly, to achieve self-knowledge and God-realization we need to learn to sit in stillness.

When we sit in stillness it may look to others as if we are not doing anything. Yet, in stillness we are doing the most



we are doing our work in the best possible manner and if not, how to make improvements. We may come up with a new and better way of doing things at work. If we run a household, we can spend some time sitting in stillness to reflect on how we can solve our family problems or make life for our family better. If we are involved in the arts, the stillness can help us tap into our creativity.

If we learn the art of sitting in silence, even for our worldly work, we will be able to transfer that ability to sitting in silence for meditation. We will find we are less jumpy and restless. We can develop the ability to sit still for the longest possible time. We will be used to stopping our mind, to let our soul have its voice. When all is still, we find the soul's voice is calling for us to find God. If we are still, we can hear the Voice of God, or the Music of the Spheres, the Celestial Harmony, or the holy Word.

We can balance our activities with times in which we are still. In this way we can improve our meditation.

important activity in life—finding our soul and God. Few people attain God in life. Why? They do not know how to do nothing. If they would learn to sit and do nothing, they would find everything.

It may be good for each of us to set aside some time daily to practice sitting in stillness. At our jobs, we can spend some time thinking about whether

The spiritual path is one of love, compassion and nonviolence. The principles of spirituality have remained the same throughout the ages. Modern science is only now coming to conclusions what the saints and mystics have realized and taught from the time immemorial. In the realm of nutrition too, modern research is confirming the supremacy of the diet followed by those leading a spiritual life i.e. vegetarian diet. In all respects, spiritual, moral and physical, the vegetarian diet is the most suitable for man. And for those who wish to follow the path leading to self-knowledge and God realization, a strict vegetarian diet is essential.

If we examine various religions and their traditions, we find that they recommend vegetarianism. Such a diet is associated with the earliest religious traditions. Many great philosophers, artists, poets and writers have been vegetarian as well. It was their sensitivity and compassion which led them to adopt the path of nonviolence towards all creation. How can we claim

to be lovers of God, lovers of His creation, if we kill the humbler members of God's family?

It is true that to live in this world, we must destroy some life; even in the plants we eat and the bacteria

we breathe have life. Every action has a reaction and the law of karma operates in the realm of diet too. So the saints say that since we cannot do without food, we should choose the diet which causes the least possible sin. In this regard, the ancient scriptures say that out of the various life forms - man, animal, bird, reptile and plant - the least life force is in the plants. Thus, karmically, by adopting vegetarian diet, man contracts the least karmic debt. Since we have to keep our body going, then keeping in view the goal

God's Original Diet
The Spiritual Way to Health



Why Vegetarian Diet

of nonviolence, we should follow the vegetarian diet because it results in the least possible destruction. God has provided man with an abundance of fruits, vegetables, grains, legumes and herbs for food. And we can eat dairy products too, which do not require killing of the animals.

Unfortunately, many people have misunderstanding about the nutritional value of the vegetarian diet and they think that it does not give us the proper food value.

Leading nutritionists after

research have confirmed that balanced vegetarian diet can certainly give us all the necessary required nutrients - proteins, vitamins and minerals etc. As more and more research is conducted, scientists, biologists and nutritionists are finding that the vegetarian diet is wholesome and healthful. If we observe in nature the strongest animals with the greatest endurance are vegetarians. The elephant, the ox and the horse are known for their might and capacity to work.

Further, even from the physiological point of view, man is most suited to a vegetarian diet - his physical structure does not place him in the same category as other meat eating animals. For example, carnivorous animals have big canine teeth, as well as claws for ripping and tearing flesh; man does not. Man's teeth more closely resemble 'the vegetarian animals' that have special flat molars for grinding.

Further, the man and vegetarian animals have very long intestines whereas the intestines of meat-eating animals

are short so that the flesh is expelled before it putrefies and produces poison.

In terms of economics too, vegetarian food is the most practical diet. The amount of meat protein produced by grazing pastureland of ten acres by animals is equivalent to vegetarian protein produced in one acre of land. Thus nine acres of land are wasted when meat is produced. Similarly, an animal eats sixteen pound of grains to produce only one pound of meat and thus fifteen pounds of grains are wasted.

Thus vegetarianism is much more productive and much less wasteful. In addition to being careful about what type of food we eat, we should also be careful about how much we eat. The basic principle with regard to food is, "Eat to live not live to eat." We should never overeat. Overeating is the cause of many health problems and some of meditation problems as well. If we eat too much we feel sleepy and drowsy and for those on spiritual path, more time spent sleeping means less time for meditation.

Dr Nori to open Shirdi Sai Baba temple in Bagga Plaza

Dr Nori plans to consecrate a third Sai Baba temple in Hicksville by early 2019 after the ones in Baldwin, Long Island, and Edison, NJ.



Dr. Dattatreya Nori is a noted Radiation Oncologist - the specialty of using radiation therapy to target cancerous cells. He is a Professor and Executive Vice Chairman of the Radiation Oncology Department at the New York-Presbyterian Hospital/Weill Cornell Medical College in New York. He is also Chairman of Radiation Oncology Unit at the New York Hospital Medical Center of Queens. In a Castle Connolly survey that was published in America's Top Doctors, Dr. Nori was selected as one of the top doctors in America. He was also named a top doctor in America for treating cancers in women by The Ladies' Home Journal.

But not many will know his selfless service to the Indian community as he founded and his family foundation supports two Shirdi Sai Baba temples in



World famous cancer specialist Dr Dattatreya Nori posing with Mr Darshan Singh Bagga after signing papers to long-lease part of Bagga Plaza II.

Baldwin, Long Island (opened in 2002 as the first Sai temple in USA, and in Edison, NJ (2008). In recognition of his professional excellence and tremendous contributions, the Indian government in 2015 conferred on him the coveted

Padma Shri award.

Now, he is starting a Sai Baba temple in Bagga Plaza II in Hicksville, the Little India of Long Island. It is likely to be consecrated and opened to public early next year.

A devotee of Sai Baba in Shirdi since his medical student years in Kurnool, Andhra Pradesh, Dr Nori feels privileged to propagate the saint's simple message of universal love and tolerance. The message is as relevant in the world today riven by strife as it was when the Baba left his mortal body 100 years ago. He feels blessed seeing that devotees coming to his Baldwin and Edison temples include Muslims and Christians besides Hindus. They feel peace and tranquillity and get wishes fulfilled. Both the temples facilitate worship services similar to that in Shri

Shirdi Sai Baba Mandir in Shirdi, Maharashtra, India. Besides, services to community include Bal Vikas centers for 150 kids in each temple as well as medical checkups and blood drives. On weekends the volunteers from the Edison temple cook and deliver meals to several shelters in New Jersey.

Dr Nori says that the Hicksville Sai temple has been inspired by requests from devotees in central and eastern parts of Long Island who had to drive long distances to go to Baldwin. He found the ideal location for the temple in Bagga Plaza II and feels grateful to Mr

Darshan Singh Bagga for a generous lease deal. He is impressed by Mr Bagga's principles of promoting interfaith harmony. He will be too happy to join hands with him in setting up free health check ups and advice, particularly breast cancer screenings.

The Hicksville temple will also have shrines to Lords Shiva, Ganesha, Murugan, Radha Krishna and Ram Parivar, Dattatreya and Nav Grah as besides the main deity of Sai Baba.

VISIONARY DEVELOPER & INVESTOR

Darshan Singh Bagga's is a fairy tale success story for an immigrant. He came to America from India with \$70 in his pocket and ended up developing approximately 300,000 sq ft of prime real estate through plazas, shopping centers and apartment complexes.



Bagga Plaza II

Darshan Singh Bagga developed a 30,000 sq. ft Bagga Plaza on a 1.5-acre plot in Hicksville, NY bought in 2001. But ignorance about his culture and financial standing led the local American community to object to the project. Fighting the town's rejections in the judicial system, he finally won the case in the NY State Supreme Court.

After an inordinate delay, Bagga Plaza II was formally opened in July this year by none other than Supervisor of the Town of Oyster Bay. By now, Hicksville central Broadway shopping area is dotted by Indian stores and restaurants. But Mr Bagga was the first to envision Hicksville as another

"Little India". While the second story of Bagga Plaza II has luxury condos, Mr Bagga has unconventional ideas for the first floor. Its one portion has been leased by the family foundation of Dr Dattatreya Nori to consecrate a Shirdi Sai Baba temple there. Another part Mr Bagga is planning to develop as an India House to project the identity of Sikhs and promote Indian culture. It will include a Gadar Memorial Hall named after Kartar Singh Sarabha, a young, early martyr of India's freedom struggle, as well as an Interfaith Library. He is also planning to rope in doctors and specialists like Dr Nori to provide free or subsidized medical check ups and health services at the venue.

Bagga Tower

In 1986 Mr Bagga bought a single-story shopping center in Rego Park, NY at a stiff price and added 9 stories on top for condos. It was opened in 1999. In the process, he successfully sponsored an amendment to the NYC Tax abatement law, which will be applicable to building above an existing structure, benefiting countless others and triggering a real estate boom in city boroughs, particularly in Manhattan.



Bagga Plaza I

**565-567 Jericho Turnpike Syosset NY, 11791
(Looking for partners to develop or buy Bagga Estate
a 12 1/2 ACRE land in Muttontown)**

Darshan Singh Bagga – Developer/Owner of Bagga Group

Contact - Mr. Bagga - 917-417-4135 / Darshan Bagga @gmail.com

Retail & Office Space available for rent at great prices

Bagga Plaza I - Syosset, NY	Bagga Plaza II - Hicksville, NY	Bagga Plaza III - Flushing, NY	Bagga Tower Condominium - Rego Park, NY	Bagga Estate Muttontown, NY
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