

# 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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# Interfaith Journal Is Launched

'One World Under God' was launched by Town of Oyster Bay Supervisor Joseph Saladino in Hicksville, NY on July 22 at a memorable event where speakers from six major religions spoke on how their faiths reinforce the Founding Principles of America as enshrined in the Declaration of Independence.

Many dignitaries, community/faith leaders joined the 125-strong audience to support the vision of the journal's publisher Darshan Singh Bagga, a well-respected name in the Sikh and Indian community. He has also started the Global Interfaith Foundation to give back to society. At the event, he gave scholarships of \$2000 each to 7 college-bound students of Hicksville High School.



At the release of 'One World Under God': (from left) Editor Parveen Chopra, Supervisor Joseph Saladino, Manmohan Singh, Publisher Darshan Singh Bagga, HAB Bank's Rizwan Qureshi, and Dr Sudhir Parikh.



Supervisor Joseph Saladino presented a Citation from the Town of Oyster Bay to Darshan Singh Bagga, joined by dignitaries including Judge Doug Lerose (extreme right).



Supervisor Joe Saladino listening in prayer to Sikh devotional singing.



Speaking at the event (from top left clockwise) Dr Sudhir Parikh, Prof IJ Singh, Dr Yousuf Syed, Prof Shailendra Palvia, Rabbi Yitschak Hassine and Ravi Vaidyanaat.



Seven graduating students of Hicksville High School were given scholarships of \$2000 each by the Baggas for pursuing higher studies.



Rose Marie Walker, Nassau County legislator from Hicksville, speaking.

# A many-splendored celebration



Supervisor Joseph Saladino at the ribbon cutting ceremony to open Bagga Plaza II built by Darshan Singh Bagga.

Town of Oyster Bay Supervisor Joseph Saladino is joined by Mr and Mrs Bagga and other dignitaries and guests in lighting the traditional lamp to inaugurate the July 22 event.



The event held under a tent on the front porch of Bagga Plaza II in Hicksville on the afternoon of July 22 was well attended.



Retired Judge Daniel Palmieri joins Darshan Bagga in presenting a plaque to Supervisor Joseph Saladino for his service to the Town of Oyster Bay and the local community.



Seven graduating students of Hicksville High School were given scholarships of \$2000 each by the Baggas for pursuing higher studies. The 7 students are Srishti Tyagi (Valedictorian of the Class of 2018), Ernesto Marinero, Navneet Lingala, Ajith Adithya, Brandy Diaz, Salaiha Mughal, and Medjie Chery.



At the release of 'One World Under God' interfaith journal by Supervisor Saladino: (from left) Parveen Chopra (editor of the paper), Dr Parveen Chopra, Gobind Munjal, Paramjeet Singh Bedi, Judge Doug Lerose, Prof IJ Singh, Hon Saladino, Manmohan Singh, publisher Darshan Singh Bagga, Rizwan Qureshi, Dr Sudhir Parikh, Mrs Bagga, Srujal Parikh, Indu Jaiswal, Renee Mehrra and Gurinderpalv Singh Josan

Thank you, dear readers, for a very positive and heartwarming response to the inaugural issue of "One World Under God." Some of you have commented via email – more bouquets than brickbats -- and many of you came to the launch event of the journal on July 22 in Hicksville, NY. The main Indian American media – both TV and print – covered the launch of the paper and the event very prominently. The journal is being published by Global Interfaith Foundation that we have started. I feel honored and thrilled that this little service to community is bringing me more good wishes and compliments than I got in my lifetime of building towers and plazas. Surely, it is also given me more inner satisfaction than making millions.

People have reacted positively and warmly to my new endeavors because these are for a good cause, which is to advance intercultural, and interreligious interaction and harmony in society and America.

So what brought me to start my journey in the interfaith field? The gist of my faith is given in this verse from Sikhism's holy scripture, Guru Granth Sahib, which begins with the words

**Awwal allah noor upaya....**

*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 good, and who is bad?*

That is precisely what is basic to the Declaration of Independence of America: that all men are created equal.

Interfaith has today become an important and urgent concept, but my faith, Sikhism, actually has origins in interfaith. Guru Nanak Dev Ji, the founder of Sikhism, was always flanked by two men named ala and Mardana, one a Hindu, the other a Muslim, the only two religions around in India in his time in the 15th century. So, the Guru's message was that there are many good things to learn from every faith.

There is more: the Guru Granth Sahib is a compilation of the writings of 32 saints of diverse sects and castes.

So, Guru Nanak and my own religion has been my inspiration in starting the Global Interfaith Foundation and "One World Under God" journal.

What also spurred me in this directions was a near-miracle early this year. I had a stiff shoulder for nine months, which restricted movement of my arms for which doctors could not find a cause or cure. This Vaisakhi in April while prostrating in a gurdwara, I thought I would not be able to get up without help and may get constrained in time to even be able to tie my turban. I prayed and beseeched Waheguru to heal my shoulder. I tried to get up and there was a crackling sound in the shoulder (evidently some entangled nerves got straightened out) and I am now as active as before. Right there I said, "Waheguru, everything is yours."

Then, recently there was a very tragic incident in Cincinnati where a Sikh man was targeted in a Hate Crime and was murdered leaving behind his wife and 4 young kids. Seeing these kids' faces it hit me that they will now grow up without a father because some person felt the need to take his life because of his turban.

I have been lucky in that my Sikh look, turban and all has been a boon not bane, as my distinct look gave me breaks early in life. I came to this country with 70 dollars in my pocket and to date have built approx. 300,000 sq ft. I thought it was time to give back to the community and society that gave so much to me. I got everything in my life due to my turban. My whole life was built around my Sikh Beliefs which made me the man I am today.

At this stage I am also reminded of a Russian short story in which a poor peasant given the promise by a big farm lord that he could take as much land as he could encircle in a day from sunrise to sunset. The man starts running fast to cover more ground, and huffing and puffing in the end dies before the deadline or completing the circle. So in the end all we need is 6 feet by 4 feet piece of land.

Now I think if I build two more plazas or towers, what difference would it make?

All the money in the world means

# Thank you, Dear Reader

For your positive response to this journal

By Darshan Singh Bagga



The Sikh faith as we know today was shaped by Guru Gobind Singh, seen here with his 4 Sahibzade.



Giani Paramjeet Singh with his family. In Sikhism, clergy can raise families.

nothing to me now if I cannot use it to spread the Interfaith message that no one is a bad person based on their religion and should never be persecuted for their religious beliefs.

I would like to end with these words: God as a symbol of truth and love and the creator of all living things in the Universe and we as his creations owe it to him to love one another regardless of our beliefs. We owe it to him to keep an open mind and heart for as many think we are all different but in reality, we are all the same.



I was touched by the plight of the family of Jaspreet Singh of Ohio who became a victim to a hate crime in May.

# Glowing coverage of launch of 'One World Under God'

Besides the extensive coverage of the July 22 launch on TV channels like TV Asia, ITV, and PTC Punjabi, here is a collection of clips so far of the coverage in Indian American papers.



## The South Asian Times

excellence in journalism



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**INVITATION**  
Readers are encouraged to write to us with their comments about the contents of 'One World Under God'. Religious scholars and experts can contribute articles. Email: darshanassociates2016@gmail.com

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It was the early 1970s and a group of us used to meet on Sundays in the basement of a school building in Flushing, NY. I was in the management and used to stand up at our gatherings and announce that I can help people find accommodation, even how to look for work. Jobs were hard to come by then. Since many of the newcomers were engineers, I would bring building map drafts from work and teach them, so they could clear interviews. You see, symbols here in America, like for hot and cold-water faucets, are different from those in India.

Then one day a Sikh gentleman who was returning to India after finishing his studies told me that I could take his furnished apartment in Manhattan. It was on 88th Street West. I moved in and would take in anybody needing a place to live. It was a one-bedroom apartment but at times we were 8 people living in there. Having lived in dorms in my college years, I did not know cooking at all. So, the culinary skills of others would come handy. We all felt good though.

When I saw that Sikhs were being discriminated and realized that with our growing communities we will need to find a bit more permanent space for our gatherings. I brought up the idea of buying the first Gurdwara building in Richmond Hill in 1973. With the Gurdwara acting as a community hub we were able to provide Indian Newcomers with a place to meet, stay and network for job opportunities.

Indian newcomers were not getting the jobs justifying their qualification from back home. Some found jobs in the New York telephone company. But Sikhs were not taken in unless they cut their hair. We filed a discrimination suit. But a problem arose. The management of Richmond Hill Gurdwara were not all turbaned Sikhs (Sikhi Saroop). And when the Human Rights

# Putting down roots in America

commissioner looking into our complaint came calling, somebody from the management said appallingly that "to be a good Sikh, you only need to be well-versed in the religion and not necessarily have Sikhi Saroop." The difficulty to find jobs also resulted in some people abandoning their faith but as my mother made me promise her before I came to America to never cut my hair, these thoughts would never cross my mind.

So, we decided to start a Sikhi Saroop management Gurdwara so that the same problem with the authorities will not arise. We sent Prof. IJ Singh and Dr. Gurcharan Singh to plead the case on our behalf and due to their great efforts, we won the case which resulted in all Sikhs getting jobs out of turn to which they



Gurheer (now Ahluwalia), Darshan Bagga, Simran Bagga

were not able to before due to their turban.

And we rented a hall in Flushing, Knights of Columbus Hall and started a makeshift gurdwara but with all Sikhi Saroop management. To Date the "Sikh Center Gurdwara" a 3-story building in Flushing follows the tradition of having an only Sikhi Saroop manage-

By Darshan Singh Bagga



Darshan Bagga, wife Lovlin Bagga, and youngest son Harpreet Bagga

ment. The Second building for the Sikh Center Gurdwara is located on 22nd Street Jamaica Ave in Queens.

Soon after my wife, Lovlin, joined me

not offered on a platter.

Along the way I also called my brother from India and helped him settle in America.

Once we got our footing, we moved to Long Island, first to New Hyde Park, buying a 3-bedroom house for \$50,000. Many families in my circle also moved from Queens to Long Island, mainly in the Manhasset area. In 1977 we had our first baby. God! She was so pretty.

We named her Gurheer Kaur. Two sons Simran and Harpreet followed in 1978 and 1981.

Lovlin has a good singing voice and in the absence of Gyanis – there were none around at the time -- she pitched in to do kirtan etc. at our Sikh gatherings. This was also the time when dollars were hard to come by for even rich people in India. So, visitors to America – whether film stars or ministers – depended on the hospitality of friends. My wife has had film industry connections. So, she would

host film stars like Dev Anand and Rajendra Kumar at our place in New York. When our daughter Gurheer was 6 months old, Lovlin took her to the Golden Temple in Amritsar and Rajendra Kumar came to the airport to receive her in Bombay. Many of the Bollywood crowd were followers of Osho Rajneesh and would fly over to America when their guru moved here. We played host to a few of them in New York.

In my engineering career I got my first Job within one month due to my Unique Sikh Appearance. I would switch jobs, and again due to my Sikh appearance get promotions and move to higher positions. I worked for a long time for Stone and Webster. For one year they stationed me in Boston, and I used to work all week there and drive back to New York to be with family for the weekends. Stone and Webster had the Shoreham Nuclear Power Plant in New York. Later on, I switched companies and worked for Ebasco in 1973 - they had 7 Nuclear Power plants and they moved me to Jericho in NY as a supervisor. I was the Nuclear Electric Energy Safety Engineer and would often go to Washington DC to ensure our company was in compliance with the rules and regulations.

In 1974, the infamous Three Miles Island nuclear accident struck like a thunderbolt. All the nuclear plants were shuttered, and companies became bankrupt. Meanwhile, by the late 70s I was also delving into real estate investment by buying small apartments. In 1981 I bought a 93-apartment complex in Kew Garden in partnership with Dr. Chhabra. Taking a loan at 18% interest rate was a bold gamble, but it worked out, though the partnership ended soon after because I bought his share of the building.

Will continue in the next issue with my real estate conquests and successes.



Young Harpreet Bagga



The Baggas' three kids: daughter Gurheer (back), Harpreet and (right) Simran Bagga.



Darshan Bagga, Simran Bagga, a friend, and Gurheer

# The first ever interfaith paper from South Asian community is launched

*A well-respected name in Sikh community as well as Indian American community, the paper's publisher Darshan Singh Bagga has also started a foundation to give back to society.*

**Hicksville, NY:** An interfaith journal titled 'One World Under God' was launched here July 22 at an event where speakers from six major world religions gave presentations on how their faiths endorse and reinforce the Founding Principles of America as enshrined in the Declaration of Independence: "...that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness."

The biweekly journal, the first such from the South Asian community, is published by Global Interfaith Foundation, helmed by Mr Darshan Singh Bagga, a Long Island investor-builder. The journal release at Bagga Plaza II, which too was formally opened that afternoon, was attended by over 125 guests and graced by dignitaries including Town of Oyster Bay Supervisor Joseph Saladino, who was the chief guest, Nassau County legislator from Hicksville Rose Walker, Parikh Worldwide Media Chairman Dr Sudhir Parikh, FIA (NY-NJ-CT) President Srujal Parikh, President of AIA-NY Gobind Munjal, Nassau County Human Rights Commission Chairman Bobby Kumar, and Prof Indrajit Saluja, Editor of The Indian Panorama as well as a few judges.

'One World Under God' is edited by Parveen Chopra, a veteran of 25 years who is also



The event also witnessed Grand Opening of the Bagga Plaza II in Hicksville. (Inset) Community leader Indu Jaiswal speaking at the event.



Mr Bagga posing with his son-in-law, Amit Ahluwalia, and granddaughter Gurbani.



Mr Bagga interviewed by a TV reporter. The launch of 'One World Under God' was widely covered by the Indian American TV and print media.

the Managing Editor of The South Asian Times and who had earlier founded the spiritual magazine Life Positive in India. The journal and the Global Interfaith Foundation aim to dispel ignorance and

create awareness in the public about faiths of others to promote social harmony and world peace.

Among those who spoke at the event included Prof IJ Singh (Professor Emeritus

NYU) on Sikhism, Dr Yousuf Syed (Trustee of the Selden Mosque) on Islam, Ravi Vaidyanat (Executive Director, Ganesh temple) on Hinduism, Shailendra Palvia (Professor at LIU Post) on Jainism and Rabbi Yitschak Hassine on Judaism. They all gave inspiring messages that we are all the children of God, all equal before

him, and we should work towards inter-religious understanding and harmony. The speakers were honored with plaques. Honorees included Dr Parikh and Surjit Singh Rakhra, former Punjab

minister. At the event, Mr Bagga also gave scholarships of \$2000 each to seven college graduating students of Hicksville High School who are pursuing higher studies. He has instituted these annual scholarship for graduating students of this school, two scholarships named after Hon. Rosemarie Walker, who has served as a trustee on the Board of Education in Hicksville, and her late husband, John Walker.

Mr Bagga, known as a 70\$ to 70 million success story who stamps his buildings with his name a la Trump and Sikh symbol called 'khande', has launched the journal and the foundation as a first step to give back to society.

The event celebrating America's 242nd Independence Day also honored 350th birth anniversary of Guru Gobind Singh Ji. The program began with Sikh prayer and devotional singing besides the National Anthem.

Indu Jaiswal, Renee Mehrra, and DJ Kucha conducted the program held outdoors under a tent. The executive program, which rain gods blessed by not pouring, was preceded by vegetarian lunch inside a hall of the Bagga Plaza.



A young girl singing Sikh scripture hymns



The audience respectfully listening to Sikh devotional singing.

# MOVING FORWARD

## – Slowly but Surely

**D**arshan Singh Bagga, an immigrant from India, and a consummate businessman, now as American as they come after over 40 years in Long Island, sees his own three-part identity as 1. commercial builder, 2 a proud American citizen, and 3. A Sikh by religion (not always in that order) and decided to roll all three of his identities in a memorable and remarkable celebration in his home town base -- Hicksville, New York.

Sunday, July 22, 2018 was an expectedly pleasant and sunny day that turned unexpectedly but pleasantly refreshing, not quite as boiling hot as it can often be. Bagga had just completed a new multipurpose commercial building. That turned out to be a good occasion.

A couple of hundred guests, New Yorkers all; a mixed bag of racial, gender, age, religious and ethnic identities as New Yorkers tend to be. There were tiny tots still in diapers and, on the other hand, there were certified seniors and the many who were in between. The local political leadership was well represented – fortunately from both political parties. Speeches were excellent and mercifully brief. A much-needed delectable lunch was enjoyed by all.

**But the program also evolved and matured into a purposeful and productive afternoon.**

True that America traces its political and national narrative from and around its struggle for independence, its unique sense of nationhood, and its structure that despite many a wrong unfortunate step remains productive and inclusive society. Nations, like people progress but not always in a straight line. Yet, as is often said, despite many zigs and zags, Americans' national arc bends towards progress, and a moral purpose. Immigrants bring to the

By Prof. I.J. Singh

American pot the ideological, cultural, philosophical, musical, and culinary riches of the world that they come from, such that the whole

the young religion of Sikhism. A cursory look at Sikh teaching will convince you that Sikh teaching is heavy with idea of our inter-

inevitable to create a larger, varied event – keep in mind American values and Sikh values and practices that define us, also forget not the variety of human practices that fundamentally unite us,



**A cursory look at Sikh teaching will convince you that Sikh teaching is heavy with idea of our interfaith reality in this world. Yes, we are Sikhs, yet we must increasingly continue to interact with our non-Sikh neighbors. We need more functions like the one organized by Darshan Singh Bagga on July 22 that knot our neighbors and communities together in our common activities. Remember that our neighbors need to know us as we need to know our neighbors.**

becomes greater than the sum of the parts. And the immigrant energy never slows down; this ever renews America. I repeat that this journey is not linear; we encounter many an unfortunate and hateful step in the journey. But it remains always a hopeful journey. That becomes our unique journey; it is and remains transformative.

So, this function in Hicksville quickly morphed into a celebration with a larger message.

Remember that the American path starts with "We the People." So, does

faith reality in this world. Yes, we are Sikhs, yet we must increasingly continue to interact with our non-Sikh neighbors. Sikhs are a minority no matter where they live, even in India where their faith arose. If our faith speaks of a single Creator common to all creation and not different Gods for the Jews, Hindus, Christians, Muslims, Sikhs, Parsees, or Brand X. Says Sikhi that all creation arises from the same light ("Ek noor tey subh jug upjiya...").

So even though this celebration was to occur in July, it became both easy and

even though not always too well – the interfaith experiences of mankind.

Holistically seen, this is what the function became. Many of the political leadership emphasized the goals of the function. Other speakers were Dr Yousuf Syed (Islam), Ravi Vaidyanaat (Hinduism), Shailendra Palvia (Jainism) and Rabbi Yitschak Hassine (Judaism). I spoke on Sikhism and tried to bind the theme into a comprehensive and common framework. And then another welcome initiative: 7 educational scholarships offered to young school students in Hicksville.

We need more functions like this that knot our neighbors and communities together in our common activities. Remember that our neighbors need to know us as we need to know our neighbors.

An ancillary benefit: I can't neglect the fact that the periodical that you are holding in your hands and carries this report today is the product of this function. Its birth was easy. Let's work to make it flower and become instrumental in binding our multi-faith existence into a more cooperative reality.

At the end I must mention that one speaker received a Lifetime Achievement Award. I could not help wondering if that means he could comfortably stop his active participation in such activities since in some ways his life is now ended. But you know, a cat has nine lives and I'll come back to such black humor another time. It was a fun day for the young and old alike.



*I(nder) J(it) Singh was born in Gujranwala (now in Pakistan) before the partition of the Indian Subcontinent in 1947. He was educated at Simla and Amritsar in India.*

*In 1960, I.J. Singh came to the United States on a Murry & Leonie Guggenheim Foundation Fellowship. He was awarded a PhD in Anatomical Sciences from the University of Oregon Medical School (now known as the Oregon Health Sciences University). He also earned a DDS from Columbia University.*

*He is now Professor Emeritus of Anatomical Sciences at New York University.*

*I.J. Singh serves as the Overseas Editor at The Sikh Review and as the Editorial Director of Nishaan.*

*He is regular commentator on SikhNet and other sites. A prolific writer and speaker on his journey as a Sikh in America, I.J. Singh is the author of five collations of essays on Sikhs and Sikhi.*

# THE IMPORTANCE OF FAITH, TOLERANCE, HUMANITY AND SPIRITUALITY IN OUR LIVES



Recently I had the honor and privilege to share in celebrating the 242nd Independence Day and the 350th birth anniversary of Guru Gobind Singh Ji and congratulate One World Under God newspaper on its launch. It is very important to recognize the power of God and faith in our society and I think this spectacular event served as a poignant reminder that our faith serves as a guiding light and a moral compass. I look forward to reading many articles in this newspaper about the vital role our faith and spirituality have in society and I am excited to have this opportunity to share my thoughts on this topic.

As Town of Oyster Bay Supervisor, I have a tradition which takes place prior to the start of business at our regular Town Board meetings. I invite our spiritual community to lead us in prayer before presiding over the issues that will come before us on the Oyster Bay Town Board. Clergy of diverse denominations are asked to connect our community with God and remind us that we share a common spirituality and purpose. It sets a very important tone and encourages all of us to be tolerant and work together to serve the greater good of humanity.

There is a higher calling to what we do in government. We endeavor to make a truly positive difference in the lives of others. Prayer before our meetings reminds all of us that we can accomplish much if we respect each other and highlight our common values of faith, mutual respect and love for one another.

I often reflect upon the significance of prayer in my life. This great nation was founded, in part, by a quest for religious freedom. Throughout American history, this freedom has been challenged by others who do not share our same ideals and values. We may worship differently, but the common thread we share is a willingness to stand up for our ideals and fight to defend our freedom. We are, after all,



By Joseph Saladino

***I would like to recognize the amazing efforts of Mr. Darshon Singh Bagga, both in terms of producing this outstanding newspaper and his efforts as President of the Global Interfaith Foundation. He has done much to promote the general welfare and created an environment of mutual respect and tolerance.***

one nation under God. What divides us is small in comparison to that which unites us.

To many, our faith in God is the very foundation on which our lives are built. We give thanks to the Lord for all of things he provides for us, both materially and spiritually. When life's complications and challenges inevitably arise, many of us are compelled to pray to the Lord to find peace or solace. Sometimes we seek answers and solutions through prayer. So many of our daily experiences are supported and enhanced through prayer. These special times allow introspective thought and can be very meditative in nature. Prayer can cleanse our soul and clear our mind.

Government can certainly be contentious, but with God's help, we gain the strength to always put people first and serve the needs of the many. We treat others as we would like to be treated. I never underestimate the importance of faith and the power of prayer. It is a great reminder that we are all in this together. God is there to watch over us

and our faith and prayers unify us to meet his higher purpose.

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.

My colleagues and I on the Oyster Bay Town Board are often asked to find solutions to

complex issues. We are fortunate to have many valuable

resources at our disposal, including an incredibly dedicated staff of caring and experienced colleagues. However, I also rely on my faith in God to provide me the strength to meet the needs of our nearly 300,000 residents. That faith and spirituality is an indispensable component in my life.

I recognize the incredible efforts taken by so many in our community to strengthen faith, values and harmony in society. For that reason, I would like to recognize the amazing efforts of Mr. Darshon Singh Bagga, both in terms of producing this outstanding newspaper and his efforts as President of the Global Interfaith Foundation. He has done much to promote the general welfare and created an environment of mutual respect and tolerance. If we all exercise a similar commitment to spiritual faith and exude efforts as humanitarians, the world would be a better place.

*May God bless you, the Town of Oyster Bay and these United States of America.*

## JOSEPH SALADINO

Oyster Bay Town Supervisor

On January 31, 2017, Joseph Saladino was sworn into office as the 70th Town of Oyster Bay Supervisor and immediately took action to

increase governmental accountability, transparency and integrity.

Supervisor Saladino kept his pledge to residents by approving a Town Budget for 2018 that cuts property taxes while eliminating wasteful spending.

Supervisor Saladino's commitment to eliminating capital borrowing in 2017, along with fiscally sound policies, has helped reduce the Town's debt by over \$121 million – the largest decrease of debt in Town history. The credit rating agency, Standard and Poor's, increased the Town of Oyster Bay's credit rating to investment grade while recognizing the



Saladino administration for reducing debt and for a strong budgetary performance in 2017 and 2018. Prior to serving as Town Supervisor, Joseph Saladino

served residents in the New York State Assembly for six terms where he was one of the original sponsors of - and approved - New York State's Property Tax Cap and STAR Rebate Checks. A lifelong community volunteer, he is a 30-year member and past Kiwanis Club President, where he received the distinguished "Kiwanian of the Year" award. He is a member of the Lions Club, the Sons of Italy-Columbus Lodge, the Chamber of Commerce, a former Trustee of the Historical Society, and was inducted into the Massapequa High School Hall of Fame and the Massapequa Mustangs Hall of Fame.

Christians often disagree among themselves about how they should approach other religions. Do we have a monopoly on truth? Are all faiths true in some way? Do we need the insight of all of us to find the truth? Some other faith communities actively discourage conversion, while others—perhaps most—feel obliged to tell the world that their religion is the best.

Personally, I like something Rabbi Jacob Neusner wrote in *World Religions in America*: perhaps we should leave it to God to decide who is right and cultivate empathy and interest in others because “all religions are interesting and important.” At a National Workshop on Christian Unity in Arlington, Virginia, Rabbi Fred Dobb shared a concept he learned from the Swedish Lutheran bishop Krister Stendahl: “sacred envy.” Sacred envy, Rabbi Dobb explained, means “I am not going to convert, but I see something in your tradition that I really like.” Some people find it threatening, of course, to acknowledge anything good in any other religion or tradition—as if others having something worthwhile means what you have is defective—but I am a better Christian when I recognize what is good in others.

So let me as a Protestant (United Methodist) Christian declare, without any intention of abandoning my own church or Christianity, some things I envy:

► I like the way that the Catholic Church and some other “liturgical” denominations see our most sacred rituals, such as the Eucharist or holy communion, as a celebration and insist that clergy are not celebrants. Everyone celebrates; the pastor merely presides at the party.

► This WASP loves the infectious joy of African American parishes. In every black church I have visited, no matter whether they were Baptists in Riverhead, AME Zion in Amityville, or Lutherans in Roosevelt, worship is exuberant. I have found the same among Latino and Korean churches.

► I love the sense of history I find in Orthodox and Catholic churches. They have a sense of continuity over millennia,

# What I like about your Faith Tradition

“surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses.” I also love the way Pentecostals, the United Church of Christ, Quakers, and Unitarian Universalists remind us that “God is still speaking.” We need both roots and wings.

► I am blown away by the generosity of many poor and ethnic-minority churches, who give affection and cash far more freely than most well-off white congregations. In my denomination, black United Methodist teenagers donate twice as much money to their church as white teens do, even though they generally have less to give. As Jack London said, throwing a bone to a dog is not charity: “Charity is the bone shared with the dog, when you are just as hungry as the dog.”

► I am inspired by the way Muslims see zakat, sharing 2.5% of their wealth with the poor, as a matter of social justice rather than personal charity. Christians are far more comfortable with offering charity than we are with challenging the conditions that create hunger, oppression, and despair. As the Brazilian archbishop Dom Helder Camara famously said, “When I give food to the poor, they call me a saint. When I ask why the poor have no food, they call me a communist.”

► I love the way that the Latter-Day Saints (a.k.a., the Mormons) empower lay people for leadership, organize themselves to help their neighbors in crisis, and give their youth important work to do. Churches often try to entertain teenagers, but what they need is a challenge to make a difference in the world. Eboo Patel’s Interfaith Youth Core can teach us the same lesson.

► I appreciate the way that Buddhists and Quakers, Jains and Brahma Kumaris gently nudge us to unplug, be quiet, and listen a while. The more that I am bombarded by ads and jangling cell phones, the more I appreciate silent

By the Rev. Thomas W. Goodhue



**At a National Workshop on Christian Unity in Arlington, Virginia, Rabbi Fred Dobb shared a concept he learned from the Swedish Lutheran bishop Krister Stendahl: “Sacred envy.” Sacred envy, Rabbi Dobb explained, means “I am not going to convert, but I see something in your tradition that I really like.”**

prayer and meditation. I also am inspired by the way they focus on treating others with loving kindness and try to “speak truth in love,” two things we could all use a lot more of.

► I admire the way that Muslims and Baha’is focus on doing good rather than avoiding evil, and I am humbled by how racially inclusive their communities are. Many churches have task forces on domestic violence, but the Islamic Center of Long Island in Westbury wisely calls their efforts the Domestic Harmony Foundation. Many Christian denominations have commissions on racism, but the Baha’is focus on “race unity— and achieve far more to overcome bias and injustice. Baha’is recognize national, cultural, and linguistic differences—and this faith community includes people from 2100 ethnic groups who speak more than 800 languages—but not racial ones. From a

scientific viewpoint, the Baha’is are right: genetically, we are all Africans.

► I am humbled by the way Sikhs feed everyone who comes to their gurdwaras. We United Methodists might offer you a cup of coffee and something to nibble after worship; Sikhs give you a whole meal. They also do this with grace, hospitality, and equality: rich and poor sit side by side, so that those who are hungry are not humiliated. As Sant Rajinder Singh put it, “The prince and the pauper should eat side by side.”

► I am bowled over by the openness of Brahma Kumaris toward people of other faiths. After I listened to a wonderful talk on meditation at Global Harmony House in Great Neck, their guru asked me if there was anything I would like to add. How wonderful it would be if she received this

sort of welcome in my church.

► I am amused, bemused, and delighted by the way Hindus seem to see Jains and Brahma Kumaris (and sometimes Sikhs, Buddhists, and everyone else) as fellow travelers on the road to God. The most popular Hindu deity, Vishnu, is said to have ten different incarnations or avatars, one of which was the Buddha. I’ve always admired those who have the “love and wit,” as the poet Edwin Markham put it, to draw a circle that draws other people in. I do believe that distinctions and boundaries can be important, but we Christians have often been too quick to exclude others, both Christians from other traditions and people of other religions. We sometimes say, “Where we put a period, God puts a comma,” but Hindus really believe this.

► And last, but certainly not least, I am indebted to Judaism for teaching me that we are called to “do justice, and love kindness, and walk humbly with your God.” And I am grateful for their teaching that we are called to *tikkun olam*, to repair the brokenness of our world. And for raising a certain Jewish kid named Yeshua (Jesus), the teacher I try to follow.

*The Rev. Thomas W. Goodhue is a United Methodist clergyman who has served churches in Hawaii, Manhattan, and Long Island and led the Long Island Council of Churches for seventeen years. He is completing a book about how to be a good neighbor in a multi-faith world. You can reach him at [twgoodhue@gmail.com](mailto:twgoodhue@gmail.com). Perhaps you have gratitude that you would like to express for other faiths and traditions?*



# Human rights and overarching principles of Jainism

By Prof Shailendra Palvia

**H**uman Rights in Jainism are based on three main pillars; an overarching philosophy of Ahimsa or non-violence, Aparigraha (non-possession); and Anekantwad (Multiplicity of views).

**Ahimsa** (Non-violence) goes over and beyond general meaning of non-violence. Ahimsa includes violence of speech and thoughts over and beyond violence of actions. I had the following message under my signature on e-mails for a long time – “Thou shall not hurt anybody directly or indirectly, intentionally or unintentionally, by action, speech or thoughts.” To that I will now add – “And if you do, ask for forgiveness.” Another great tenet of Jainism is Forgiveness which is now being touted as a great cure by psychologists and psychiatrists.

**Aparigraha** (Non-acquisition) is the concept of non-materialism, encouraging people to be happy and satisfied with minimum material possessions. Mahatma Gandhi said, “There is enough in the world for the needs of all, but not for their greed.” Aparigraha helps us conserve scarce world’s resources. In this age of economic inequities within and across countries, adherence to this principle can reduce world conflicts and frustrations. It should be noted that many extremists are recruited from poor countries of the world. 80-20 rule applies between developed and developing countries of the world in terms of population, GDP, Export earnings, military expenditure, weapons imports, and energy consumption. This gross inequity can be avoided through embracing and assimilation of aparigraha in our lives. Aparigraha can also be interpreted as the spirit and joy of sharing and caring.

On a personal note, we lived in Hicksville, NY for 11 years from 1995 to 2006. During the transition from Hicksville house to our current Iselin home which was still being built, we lived in a 2-BR apartment in Linden,

NJ. I tell you, we did not feel any difference living in a big house versus this small apartment. We lived there with just 10% of our total belongings and enjoyed thoroughly. That is the power of Aparigraha. I crave and aspire to live in a smaller home where we can live happily with limited possessions of dresses, shoes, furniture, books, files, frames and have much more peace of mind.

**Anekantwad** (Multiplicity of Views) is the concept of having the ability to respect diverse perspectives on any issue. It is the respect and tolerance of differing views and beliefs of others. There is the famous parable of 5 blind men trying to describe an elephant based on who is touching which part of elephant’s body. Only after one appreciates and comprehends various perspectives can one understand the whole truth. This is the doctrine of multiplicity of views. When we are free from dogmas, almost all world’s conflicts and controversies can be solved or diffused with meaningful negotiations and compromises. Mahatma Gandhi once said, “I advise a man not from my standpoint, but from his. I try to put myself in his shoes. When I cannot do so, I refuse to advise”.

**Declaration of Independence drafted in 1776 by Thomas Jefferson. Unique guiding principle, “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness.”**

**Here are some parallels and contradictions with Jainism.**

## JAINISM AND EQUALITY OF MEN

Yes, Jainism emphasizes equality ad infinitum. All of us are born equal. Not just men. Also women and children. Poor and rich. Sick and healthy. Young and old. Of any color. Belonging to any

race, religion, caste or creed. Jainism goes well beyond - not only humans but animals and all living beings.

Jainism confirms equality of souls of all living being in their true states. Bodies do not matter. All souls are spiritually equal to one another.



*I had the following message under my signature on e-mails for a long time: “Thou shall not hurt anybody directly or indirectly, intentionally or unintentionally, by action, speech or thoughts.” To that I will now add – “And if you do, ask for forgiveness.”*

Each soul has the same inherent attributes of infinite knowledge, infinite perception and infinite consciousness. All souls want to live in peace and happiness. Each soul has the same feelings for happiness and suffering. No soul wants or desires suffering. All souls have the same ability to attain full potential including liberation.

## JAINISM AND THE RIGHT TO LIFE

“Live and Let Live” is the epochal mantra of Jainism. This right covers all living beings, not just human beings. Every living being has an inalienable right to live in peace without being disturbed by others. Vegetarianism and now Veganism are a direct outcome of this philosophy of universal right to life. Being humane to animals must translate into not eating meat and fish. Being humane to turkeys means pardoning all of them on Thanksgiving Day

and not just one Presidential Pardon. Billions of animals are killed each year to produce meat.

Steve Jobs, Bill Clinton, Michael Jackson, Amitabh Bachchan, Bernard Shaw, and many more realized the virtues of vegetarianism from ethical, environment and health perspectives. Our

terms of thought, speech, and action.

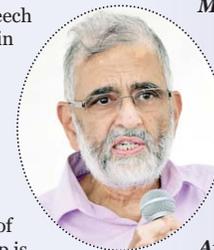
Each soul is unique and independent. Jainism is a scientific religion. Not ritualism, but rationalism. Each individual is at total liberty to study, observe, experience, experiment, analyze, rationalize and then form his/her own set of rules to lead life peacefully and happily – that is the goal of Jain religion.

## JAINISM AND PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS

The ultimate goal of Jains is to attain salvation from the almost infinite cycle of birth and death. Why? Because, then the soul can live in infinite bliss and happiness forever. Boil it down to our existence each time on earth for 70-80 years, each one of us has the right to pursue peace, happiness, tranquility, harmony in this life to ultimately achieve the goal of Moksha. True happiness means attaining the state of “Veetragei,” meaning devoid of Raag or devoid of all passions of attachment (raag) and aversion/dwesh -- anger, greed, ego, deception/ When that happens, you remain unaffected by praise or criticism and continue to walk the path of happiness. I end with a verse from a popular bhajan (translated):

*May worldly creatures be blissful, fear may no one feel!  
Forgetting ill will, pride and guilt, new songs of joy may sing with zeal !!*

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astronomical costs of health care will be fixed, limited resources of water and earth will be saved, and environment of earth, water and air will be cleaner if more and more people embrace vegetarianism and veganism. Two weeks back came one big news. WeWork bans meat at company events and won't let employees expense meals that includes meat, because of the adverse environmental impact.

## JAINISM AND RIGHT OF LIBERTY

Freedom of speech and thought within the bounds of Ahimsa is guaranteed in Jainism. Concept of independence of each soul is the fundamental principle of Jainism. Self-help is at the core of Jain theory of liberty of each individual in

When we look at the world today, with all the technological advancements, the number of suicides has increased in all countries. When we take pride in being able to connect to anybody in the world online or through our smart phone, it is increasingly becoming more and more difficult to stay connected to the person who lives under the same roof as us.

This period of moral and spiritual crisis calls for the need of real, time-tested solutions and when one looks at the treasure of inspiring and creative offerings given in Hindu Dharma, the sense of 'whole world being one family' brings a sense of assurance in our ability as human race to help each other.

What is truth? The claim of recognizing truth to be perceived in a pre-determined shape or shapelessness causes lot of misunderstanding and bloodshed in the world.

Is it possible to have two 'truths'? The Rig Vedic hymns clarify, "The wise call him Indra, Agni, Varuna, Savitr. To what is one, sages give many a name (1.164.46)."

Swami Vivekananda simplified this idea by saying, 'infinite could be ways to reach the infinite'. So, the Hindu idea of reaching the ultimate in various ways, by adopting different methods, offers a way to not just tolerate but accept and appreciate the other methods of reaching the Ultimate.

We need to reiterate that the term 'Hindu' is non-existent in Hindu scriptures, it was given by invaders coming from across the 'Sindhu river'. Whatever the origins, Hinduism is a tradition which has its roots in the Vedas, (Ved is derived from the root 'vid' in Sanskrit, which means 'to know'). So, Hinduism is a 'tradition of knowledge' that encourages use to go beyond limitations and merge in the limitlessness.

But wherever human beings have made sincere attempts in their quest for truth, their findings resonate with 'Vedanta'. My guru says, 'Vedanta and Yoga, among a thousand other things, stand out as original contributions of Hinduism to the world.'

In the lecture, on the theme, 'The Gist and Gift of Hinduism' at Hindu conference in New

# Hindu thought: Be true to yourself

By Ashok Vyas

York in 1984, Swami Shri Ishwarananda Giriji Maharaj said, "Vedanta gives us a scientific basis for adapting fundamental yogas to arrive at the vision of Truth which is fullness and meaningfulness of life, the unity of all forces and forms of life. Therefore, an experience of Truth delivers man from his inward limitations and enables him to participate in life with as much completeness and creativity, absorption and inspiration as an artist exhibits in his art."

Vedanta pertains to the realization of the true self and this true self is common to all. So if you realize yourself, you can't have hatred for anybody because, others are not different than you. The realization of truth leads to love and compassion. This is not driven by the desire to gain name and fame. As per the Hindu tradition, being kind and taking care of others is a natural extension of one's being.

Acharya Shankar uplifted Bharat with the message of Vedanta. The meaning of 'Bharat' is 'that which is immersed in the knowledge', this is not computer or mechanical knowledge, this is the knowledge that liberates. It is also referred to as 'Brahmvidya', BrahmVidya is considered as 'Sarvavidya-pratishtha'. This contains the seed of all forms of knowledge. Upanishads have given many examples to indicate nature of the self - always self-distinct, self-sustained, untouched.

The Man is considered as the best creation of the creator among all species because he is bestowed with the capacity to know the source. Source of existence, source that is all pervading, that is not just creator, it also sustains and dissolves the creation. Our sages have declared, out of their realization, that man is capable of being aware of 'Brahman'. Brahman is the fundamental ground of existence.

The concept of 'Ahimsa'

finds a reference is Mahabharat:

Ahimsa aramo dharmaha Dharma himsa tathiva cha Which means 'Non-violence is the ultimate dharma. So too is violence in service of Dharma.'

So violence done to protect dharma and destroy adharm is also dharma.



**The Hindu concept of Dharma is not rigid, it is open to each individual to design his or her Sadhana. Dharma is dynamic and it has to be discovered at each step with a sense of newness.**

The Hindu concept of Dharma is not rigid, it has openness for each individual to design his or her Sadhana. Dharma is dynamic and it has to be discovered at each step with a sense of newness because dharma is related to manifesting one's divinity at every step in different situations.

This calls for preparing inner environment with certain alertness and practices that would result in the best possible reflexes and reaction at any given point of time.

Swamji makes it clear in the book 'Samvit Sadhana', 'Dharma has to manifest in action and that will ultimately take you to Acyuta, that principle which is never shaken - the ultimate Parabrahma. Dharma is means to Brahman.'

Acharya Shankar also says, truth can't be attained through

action, action is needed and it is important for the purification of the mind. Why so much importance to the purification of mind? Only pure mind can perceive or realize Brahman.

What is Brahman? New York based Prof Anand Saxena has written a book titled 'Hinduism, A Religion For The Modern Age'. In the chapter

of OM by shutting down all senses leads to a realization of the fundamental unity of everything in the universe. Many of these ideas about Brahman are also elaborated in Bhagavadgita: "I am the intelligence of the intelligent. I am the splendor of the splendid. (vii, 9); "I am the strength of the strong, devoid of desire and passion" (Vii.10); and "The syllable OM is Brahman," (VIII 13)

OM is also referred to as 'Omkar'. Anand Saxena again: "From the chapter, "Guru Nanak also accepts the Hindu cyclical concept of time, describing the world as perishing and being reborn, coming and going. In true bhakti tradition and somewhat similarly to the way in which Bhagavata Purana identifies all human with gopis who clamor for union with the Supreme, Guru Nanaks says that everyone is the bride of God.

The independent India adapted 'Satyamev Jayate' as the national motto, the meaning of this declaration from Mundako Upanishad is "Truth is always victorious." My guru further clarifies, "If you are not true to yourself, how could you experience only continuous deception and you end up complaining all the time. The Father of Nation used Satyaprasana as a silent protest, as Satyagraha."

It is important to be true to oneself, then life reveals its fullness, creative richness and meaningfulness.

Concept of Divinity in Hinduism, he writes, "The Kena Upanishad declares Brahman to be the source of rational thinking: "That which is not expressed through speech but that by which speech itself is expressed; that, truly, know thou, is Brahman ... That which is not thought by mind but by which, they say the mind thinks - that, truly is Brahman."

Prof Saxena has given many references about the description of Brahman in Shastras, "In still another approach, it is considered best to abandon all descriptive words, and declare the primeval sound 'OM' to be Brahman Ometi Brahman - Tattiriya Upanishad, 1.8.

Meditation with the sound

Ashok is a poet, Hindu priest and program director with ITV Gold. He is founder of Insight for Creativity and brain behind 'Hindu Creative Alliance'. He can be reached at insight4creativity@gmail.com



By Prof

Faroque A Khan

Chairman, Interfaith Institute of Islamic Center of Long Island

# Possibilities and Limits of Forgiveness

Pardeep Kaleka, whose father Satwant Singh Kaleka and five others were murdered at the Sikh Temple of Wisconsin on August 5, 2012, led the Sikh Community of Oak Creek, Wisconsin through forgiveness and community outreach. They established Serve2Unite -- S2U -- which seeks to promote practices of compassion, understanding, inclusion, and diversity appreciation. The program fosters connectivity and dialogue between people of all backgrounds, beginning first and foremost with youth ages K-12th grades, who are instrumental in the design and implementation of programs that address the pressing issues of violence in their communities. Serve2Unite is also active in attempting to counter violent extremism by joining with other groups in "deconstructing the appeal of violent extremist groups."

I was one of the judges for the Hofstra University Guru Nanak award committee where I learnt about the great work of Serve2Unite. Pardeep Kaleka and Prof Diana Eck from Harvard university pluralism project were the joint recipients of the 2015 Hofstra University Guru Nanak Award.

Rais Bhuiyan, an American Muslim from Bangladesh, is an extraordinary human being with a remarkable story. On Sept 21, 2001 he was shot in the face by Mark Stroman, who called himself "Arab Slayer". The subsequent struggle of Rais Bhuiyan in forgiving Mark Stroman and leading a national campaign to get him clemency all the way to the Supreme Court is documented in great detail in the book: *The True American: Murder and Mercy in Texas* by Anand Giridharadas.

Bhuiyan, a humble, soft spoken young man, shared his impactful story, including how he reconciled with the difficulties he faced—a lost job, fiancée, and more than \$60,000 in medical bill s— and how good Samaritans of all faiths helped him overcome these challenges. When asked why he forgave Stroman, his response was that his faith and parents taught him the importance of forgiveness and



It has been six years since the attack on the Wisconsin gurdwara. One of the six victims, Satwant Singh Kaleka's son Pardeep Kaleka led the community in forgiveness.

peace. Quran Sura 5 Verse 8— O Ye who believe, let not the hatred of others to you make you swerve to wrong and depart from justice.

Izzeldin Abuelaish is a Palestinian medical doctor and author. He was born in Gaza, and was the first Palestinian doctor to work in an Israeli hospital. He was active in promoting Israeli-Palestinian reconciliation. On January 16, 2009 his three daughters and a niece were killed by Israeli tank fire directed at his home. He had been calling in reports about the effect of the war by phone to a TV station. In his regularly scheduled report, in tears, he described their killing on-air, in a video that was widely circulated in Israel and the world.

Abuelaish's extraordinary response to the loss of his children won him humanitarian awards around the world. Instead of seeking revenge or sinking into hatred, Abuelaish is calling for the people of the

Middle East to start talking to each other. To quote him, "If I could know that my daughters were the last sacrifice on the road to peace between Palestinians and Israelis, then I would accept their loss". I had the honor of meeting Dr

Abuelaish at a medical conference in

Toronto, Canada

and was deeply touched and impressed by his humility, sincerity and spirituality.

Then, there is the case of two Indian immigrant engineers who were shot at a Kansas bar last year. Adam W. Purinton was kicked out of a bar in Olathe,

Kansas, on Feb. 22, 2017 after patrons complained that he had leveled ethnic slurs

at the two men and questioned their immigration status. But Purinton, 52, soon returned to the bar with a semiautomatic pistol and shot the men, killing Srinivas Kuchibhotla, 32, and injuring Alok Madasani, 30. The gunman

also shot a third man who attempted to intervene, striking him in the hand and in the chest, the indictment later said. Commenting on the life sentence given to Purinton in May this year, Kuchibhotla's widow said, "Today's sentencing in the murder of my husband will not bring back Srinu to me, but it will send out a very strong message that hate is never acceptable."

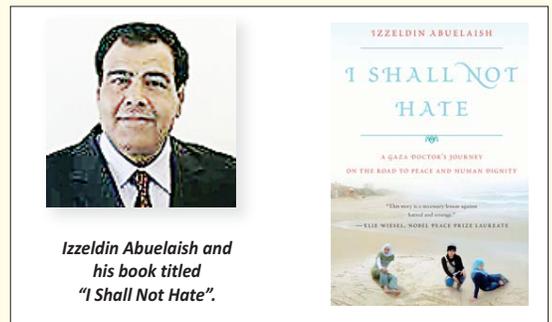
Conclusion and Invitation

I have outlined the stories of Pardeep Kaleka, Rais Bhuiyan and Izzeldin

Abulaish who in spite of the hate crimes were able to forgive and move on with their lives.

I often wonder how many of us have the capacity and compassion to follow the exam-

ples of Pardeep, Rais, and Izzeldin. To address and explore the possibilities and limits of forgiveness in various faith traditions the Interfaith Institute of ICLI (Islamic Center of Long Island) on November 11 will have a book discussion on "The Sunflower" by Simon Wiesenthal. The book describes the author's experience as a prisoner in a concentration camp during World War 2. He is asked by a dying Nazi soldier for his forgiveness—the author asks—What would you do? The discussion will be led by IFI board members emeritus Prof of Ethics Arthur Dobrin and Rev Tom Goodhue, retired executive director of Long Island Council of Churches.



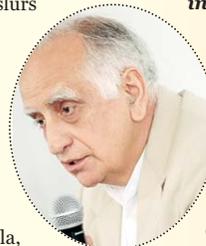
Izzeldin Abuelaish and his book titled "I Shall Not Hate".



Sunayanna Dumala and her deceased husband Srinivas Kuchibhotla.



Rais Bhuiyan speaking at the Islamic Center of Long Island in May 2016.



Prof Faroque Ahmed Khan helped launch the interfaith institute of the Islamic Center of Long Island in Westbury, NY. He graduated from Government Medical College in Kashmir and served as Chairman of Medicine at Nassau University Medical Center from 1987 to 1999. He was appointed professor of medicine at Stony Brook and became the first Muslim awarded Mastership in American College of Physicians (ACP). Contact : [Faroquekhan@outlook.com](mailto:Faroquekhan@outlook.com)

By Inder Singh

Part one of a look back in two parts.

# 100 years of Indians in America

Immigrants from Punjab started coming to the United States of America at the beginning of the 20th century. They worked at menial jobs and lived in crumbling structures. For several years, they lived in a free country without freedom. Only in 1946, after a long struggle, they got the right to US citizenship. Thereafter, they could buy property, get a job commensurate with their qualifications, marry a person of their choice, and were free to travel and visit India, the country of their birth.

In 1897, Queen Victoria of England and the Empress of India included a Sikh regiment from the Indian Army in her diamond jubilee celebrations. On the return journey, the soldiers were sent back to India via Canada. Most of these soldiers were originally farmers and were fascinated with the potential for farming opportunities. They dreamed of returning to Canada after retirement. And some did. Several Indians came to the US after they had been in Canada for some time.

On April 5, 1899, four Punjabis who had worked in the British Royal Artillery in Hong Kong, landed in San Francisco and were allowed to stay by the US Immigration Service. That was an encouraging signal for others to follow.

The Indians in the United States and Canada were commonly called "Hindus".

From 1899-1907, Indians legally admitted to the US numbered only 1967. But, concentration of Indians in a few small communities in the Pacific Coast states, particularly those with turbans, drew attention and provoked hostility from the Asiatic Exclusion League which carried propaganda against the "The Tide of Turbans" and "Hindu Invasion of America".

There was violence against the community in 1907 in Bellingham, near Seattle, driving them away.

Similar assaults also took place in some other cities in California where the immigrants had settled.

## GADARITES' MISSION TO END BRITISH RULE IN INDIA

Higher education in US universities was a powerful magnet for young people. America provided them opportunity to "earn and learn" and so Indian students were attracted to US universities. However, several students upon graduation were not able to get jobs commensu-

rate with their qualifications. The Indian students attributed the racial prejudice and discrimination to their being nationals of a subjugated country and thus wanted India to be free from British slavery. Many formed organizations to promote independence for India and explored ways and means to attain self-rule. Taraknath Das, a student, started publishing a magazine Free Hindustan in 1907 in Seattle, advocating armed rebellion against the British rule. G.D. Kumar started a Punjabi paper Swadesh Sewak in Vancouver. Har Dyal started Bande Mataram in 1909 for communicating his revolutionary ideas to the students and the Punjabi settlers who were already facing racial prejudice and discrimination.

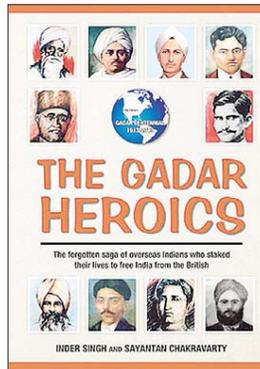
Har Dyal who had come from England after relinquishing his scholarship at Oxford was identified with nationalist activities in the US. He had been a faculty member at Stanford for about two years. He inspired many students studying at the University of California at Berkeley and channelized the pro-Indian, anti-British sentiment of the students for independence of India. Two of his many student followers, Katar Singh Sarabha and Vishnu Govind Pingle, later on played prominent roles in the Gadar movement.

Dyal's fervor for India's freedom spread to Punjabi farmers and laborers who had already been victim of racial attacks, discrimination and repression from the host community. A meeting of some patriotic and enlightened Indians was called in May 1913 in Astoria, Oregon, where Har Dyal, Bhai Parmanand and others passionately spoke for throwing the British out of India and securing liberation by all means at their disposal. It was at this meeting that Hindustan Association of the Pacific Coast was formed with the objective to liberate India with the force of arms from British colonialism. Its headquarters was established in San

Francisco where a building was purchased and Gadar magazine launched. Gadar literally means revolt or mutiny and its contents were aimed at exposing British imperialism. The association itself became known as the Gadar Party.

The Gadar movement became a symbol of political consciousness of overseas Indians. Its influence was so powerful that when called upon, over 6,000 overseas Indians, mostly Punjabis, returned to India to fight for India's freedom.

The British government got alarmed at the popularity of the Gadar movement and free accessibility and availability of the 'seditious' literature. They used every means to stop its circulation, particularly in India. At the behest of the British, the American government arrested Har Dyal in March 1914, but later released him on bail. He jumped the



Inder Singh co-authored the book to relate the forgotten saga of overseas Indians who staked their lives to free India from the British.

bail and left for Switzerland and from there, he went to Germany.

World War I broke out in August 1914, in which Germany fought against England. The Germans offered the Gadarites funds to buy arms and ammunitions to expel the British from India. The Gadarites started an energetic campaign to mobilize overseas Indians in Singapore, Burma, Egypt, Turkey and

Afghanistan and particularly Punjabis in Canada and America, and to inspire them to go to India to launch a revolution. They drew plans to infiltrate the Indian army and excite the soldiers to fight – not for but against the British Empire – and free India from the shackles of British imperialism. The irony of that valiant effort was that the Indian leadership openly and willingly co-operated with the British, thereby prolonging India's serfdom.

The traitors of the Gadar movement leaked out the secret plans to British spies. As a result, the ships carrying arms and ammunitions never reached India. Many Gadarites were taken captives upon reaching India. In the United States too, several Gadarites and their German supporters were prosecuted in the San Francisco Hindu German Conspiracy Trial (1917-18).

## STRUGGLE FOR US CITIZENSHIP

The United States citizenship conferred many rights and privileges but only "free white men" were eligible to apply. Many anthropologists used "Caucasian" as a general term for "white" in the absence of any precise definition of the word "white." Indian nationals from the north of the Indian Sub-Continent and people from some Middle East countries were also considered Caucasian. Thus, several Indians were granted US citizenship in different states.

Bhagat Singh Thind, who had joined the US army, applied for citizenship in the state of Washington. He received his citizenship in 1918 wearing a military uniform. However, the immigration service revoked his citizenship because he was not a "free white man." Thind persisted and his case reached the Supreme Court, which decided in 1923 that since the "common man's definition of "white" did not correspond to "Caucasian", Indians could not be naturalized.

Meanwhile the 1917 Immigration Act virtually barred all Asians from entering the US legally. It also imposed English literacy restrictions. Thus the new legal

immigration from India was completely stopped.

In 1943, the Chinese obtained right of naturalization, so there was a possibility for a legislative solution for Indians too. Indian community activists like J.J. Singh, Dr. Anup Singh, Syud Hossain, Krishanlal Shridharani, Haridas Muzumdar, Mubarak Ali Khan, Taraknath Das relentlessly lobbied with the elected representatives of the American people for the grant of civil rights to the nationals of India who were already in the US. Dalip Singh Saund raised funds from the California Sikh farming community for the lobbying effort. J.J. Singh, president of India League of America, persuaded two Congressmen to jointly introduce a bill for US citizenship for Indian nationals. The bill was backed by some major newspapers and by some prominent Americans including well known author Pearl S. Buck.

Fortunately, President Truman took special interest in the passage of Luce-Cellar bill which was finally approved by both Houses of Congress restoring rights of citizenship of Indian nationals in the United States. In 1946, he signed the bill allowing 100 Indians to become naturalized citizens and another 100 Indians to immigrate every year.

Between 1948 and 1965, many Indian residents of America acquired US citizenship including Saund. Active for some time in the Democratic Party, Saund successfully ran for US Congress, becoming the first Indian/Asian to get elected to the House. He served in Congress for three terms. J.J. Singh, Dr. Anup Singh and Syud Hossain had gone back to live in free India.

*Continued in the next issue.*

**Former Chairman of GOPIO (Global**

**Organization of People of Indian Origin), Inder Singh**

**regularly writes and speaks on Indian**

**Diaspora. The author of The Gadar Heroics,**

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The Hindu Temple Society of North America (Sri MahaVallabha Ganapati Devasthanam) was incorporated in 1970. Plans were made to raise funds for a common place of worship for the Hindu community. A building on Bowne Street in Flushing, NY in which a non-servicing Russian orthodox church existed was purchased. For the construction of the temple in the traditional temple architecture style men and materials all had to come from India. The temple was consecrated on July 4, 1977 to coincide with the American Independence Day.

Apart from serving the religious needs of the devotees in Queens in particular and New York in general, the temple also serves the neighboring states and devotees who have moved away from New York request religious services to be performed in absentia. Priests are also sent to the homes of devotees to perform certain specific rituals like house-warming, weddings and to funeral homes for final rites of the deceased.

According to Hindu religious codes, after the first consecration with elaborate religious services for 5 days, re-consecration should be done once in every 12 years or even earlier if there has been some construction activity or expansion. Thus, they have performed three re-consecrations of the temple in 1988, 2009 and 20. Cow and elephant are holy and auspicious for Hindus. In the last two re-consecrations following expansions, the temple performed poojas (prayers) to

# The Hindu Temple Society of North America, NY



**Sri MahaVallabha  
Ganapati  
Devasthanam**

*It is informally known as Ganesh temple in Flushing.*



*The presiding deity is Lord  
Ganapati.*

these two holy animals brought live to the temple.

The temple's main entrance, easily identifiable by the decorative and beautifully carved pyramid-like structure, is on Holly Avenue. Agopura or a tower is a distinguishing architecture in a Hindu temple. There are four beautifully carved towers in all the cardinal directions. The glass-roofed walkway has 16 stone pillars on which exquisite figures of different forms of Ganesha idols are installed. There is also a 50-foot tall tower called Raja Gopuram (Royal tower) on which different forms of deities and animals are carved making this tower both divine and a univer-

sal representation.

The Temple houses all the deities of the Hindu pantheon – Sri Ganesha, Siva, Vishnu Brahma, Shanmukha, Ayyappa, Parvati, Lakshmi, Saraswati, Kamakshi, Hanuman, the 9 planets (navagraha), etc. Several festivals are celebrated throughout the year but the most cherished em is the Ganesha Chaturthi 9-day festival in the month of August or September every year. Elaborate religious services with colorful and innovative decorations to Sri Ganesha and holy chantings by priests and devotees jointly are performed. On the last day, invariably a Sunday, the elegantly decorated

utsava (festival) deity of Lord Ganesha is placed on our Temple's 16 feet tall pure silver chariot and taken in a procession on the main streets of Flushing pulled by a motor car and symbolically by devotees to the accompaniment of traditional Nadaswara (pipe and drum). NYPD precinct 109 extend their big help in maintaining security and order in the crowd as thousands of devotees, singing, dancing and chanting holy hymns accompany the procession.

Invited elected officials also grace the event. During the 9-day festival, about 50 thousand lunch boxes are distributed to the devotees. The Temple's

adjoining Community Center has a specious canteen and a gift shop in the basement, two spacious halls for weddings and cultural programs on the first floor and an auditorium with the state-of-the-art facilities,

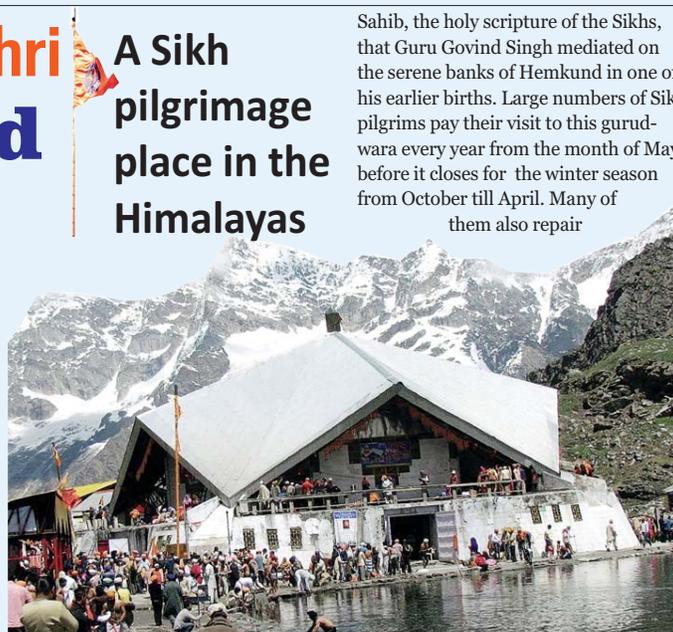
The temple runs a weekend school where devotees' children are taught first about the religion and languages and also tuition up to high school level by volunteer teachers. Children are also trained in fine arts like classical music, veena and dance. The Temple participates in inter-faith programs and as part of outreach activities organizes soup kitchen twice a month.

## Gurudwara Shri Hemkund Sahib Ji

### A Sikh pilgrimage place in the Himalayas

Hemkund Sahib (also spelled Hemkunt), formally known as Gurudwara Shri Hemkund Sahib Ji, is a Sikh place of worship and pilgrimage site in Chamoli district, Uttarakhand, India. It is devoted to Guru Gobind Singh (1666–1708), the 10th Sikh Guru. With its setting of a glacial lake surrounded by seven mountain peaks, each adorned by a Nishan Sahib on its cliff, it is according to the Survey of India located in the Himalayas at an elevation of 4,632 meters (15,197 feet).

It is recorded in the Guru Granth



Sahib, the holy scripture of the Sikhs, that Guru Govind Singh mediated on the serene banks of Hemkund in one of his earlier births. Large numbers of Sikh pilgrims pay their visit to this gurudwara every year from the month of May before it closes for the winter season from October till April. Many of them also repair

the pilgrimage trail through selfless service called kar seva, which forms an important concept in the Sikh faith. Hemkund Sahib also houses a scenic lake, in the water of which, the devotees take a dip. Hemkund Sahib is nestled amidst seven snow capped peaks and marvelous snowy glaciers. The nature is reflected here with all its mighty appearance in the crystal clear alluring water of Hemkund lake, which is fed by the glaciers from majestic peaks known as Hathi Parvat and Saptrishi peaks. A small stream known as Himganga originates from this imposing lake. Hemkund has got mentions in the Ramayana. It is believed that the younger brother of Lord Rama, Lakshmana regained his health by meditating on the banks of Hemkund after the severe injuries he received from Meghnath during Rama-Ravana war. The Lakshmana temple is built at the place where he meditated to regain the health.

# Mr Bagga honors religious luminaries at July 22 event

Town of Oyster Bay Supervisor Joseph Saladino joined 'One World Under God' publisher Darshan S. Bagga and his wife Lovlin Bagga to honor speakers at the event, some of whom are also contributing articles to the journal.



Sikh scholar Prof IJ Singh of NYU who contributes articles to 'One World Under God', is presented a plaque.



Dr Yousuf Syed, Trustee of Islamic Association of Long Island, being honored.



Rabbi Yitschak Hassine, of West Hills Torah Center, Huntington, NY, is honored.



Ravi Vaidyanat, Executive Director of Ganesh temple in Flushing who spoke on Hinduism, is presented a plaque.



Honoring Shailendra Palvia, Professor, LIU Post, Brookville, NY, an expert on Jainism.



Town of Oyster Bay Supervisor Joseph Saladino presented a citation from the Town to Darshan Singh Bagga, even as media magnate Dr Sudhir Parikh and Mrs Lovlin Bagga look on.



The July 22 program started with shabad kirtan (Sikh devotional singing).



Darshan Singh and Lovlin Bagga felt honored as so many esteemed members of the community joined them at the July 22 celebration.

# Vignettes from July 22 event at Bagga Plaza II

The Journal '**One World Under God**' was released at Bagga Plaza II in Hicksville, NY, which too had a Grand Opening that day. It was also a celebration of **America's 242nd Independence Day** and the **350th birth anniversary of Guru Gobind Singh Ji**



Builder of plazas and towers, now publisher of '**One World Under God**', Darshan Singh Bagga posing with judges, serving and retired.



Darshan Singh and Lovlin Bagga with their family at the event.



It was a full house. Here Mr Bagga is seen with family and friends at the event.



Panj Pyare from Hicksville gurdwara posing with (from left) Gurinderpal Singh Josan, a guest, Darshan Singh Bagga, Gurbani, and Paramjeet Singh Bedi.



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(1) Srujal Parikh, President of FIA, addressing the audience. (2) Prof. Balbinder Singh Bhogal of Hofstra University spoke about Sikhism. (3) Renee Mehrra, TV personality and social-political activist, was the MC. (4) Paramjeet Singh Bedi, ex-President of Hicksville gurdwara, speaking. (5) Gurbani Kaur spoke in praise of her grandfather, Mr Bagga.