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Babaji's Earthquake Prayer

After the devastating earthquake in Gujarat, His Holiness Baba Virsa Singh asserted, "Everything is under God's control—darkness as well as light, conflict as well as peace. The heavens, lowerworlds, planets, oceans, winds, and water all go by His order. If the natural world is not under God's control, then all the prophets and scriptures are wrong. Events like this are not within the control of any human. This earthquake occurred according to the order of God. We cannot criticize God's order. God is unerring.

Perhaps the places where the victims will take their next births are already decided. This is God's programme. In India we believe in rebirth and in karma—the consequences of our thoughts and actions.

A natural creation of God has erupted. We can only pray, 'Oh God, we human beings are Your family. You are like a farmer who harvests his crop whether it be unripe, ripe, or half-ripe. This was Your crop, which You Yourself were caring for. Someone's child,

someone's father and mother have gone, someone has gone at half his full age.' God knows what He has done. We can only pray, 'We cannot bear such dreadful wrath, but we cannot object as to why it has been done. You have created us. We are Your garden. You are to look after us. We cannot interfere in where You will plant Your seedlings. You are our Owner. '

We cannot challenge God's order, but we can worship, recite scripture, conduct [havan](#) [sacred fire], and request through such worship, 'We people are too weak to tolerate such disasters. Please bless those souls who have passed on, so that they shall not wander and may have a good new life. Please meet the needs of those who are living. By Your great mercy, may such a tragedy not occur again. If there are to be earthquakes, please send them to uninhabited wildernesses.'

It is one thing to give material help to those who are suffering, but the greatest thing is to beg for God's mercy. God can end all difficulties. In our time, many people have abandoned worship of God. As it is written in the Guru Granth Sahib, 'God is hungry for love and devotion.'

In Gobind Sadan, Jaap Sahib Chandi di War, and Hanuman Chalisa are being read around the clock so that humanity may enjoy peace and prosperity. I appeal to the whole world to worship and read scriptures, requesting God that such a disaster may not occur in any country in the future. The devotional activities in Gobind Sadan are meant to bring peace and pleasure in the world, to end crime, and to bring love among people. It is our prayer that no thorn should prick anyone."

To honour visiting foreign delegations and give spiritual perspectives on the earthquake, the Gobind Sadan Institute for Advanced Studies in Comparative Religion held a special programme on February 8th. Dr. Karan Singh, World Chairman of the Temple of Understanding, stated, "Baba Virsa Singh Ji for many years has been teaching from the various scriptures to show that in the ultimate analysis, any action that divides people, that creates hatred and misunderstanding, is anti-religious, although it may be done in the name of religion. And any action that brings about harmony and understanding and peace and goodwill is a deeply religious act. Here in Gobind Sadan you have a living example of an interfaith community and of a guru who teaches the importance of interfaith harmony."

Dr. Karan Singh continued, "This terrible tragedy that has occurred in Gujarat has again brought out the fact that in disaster, there is no religious difference. All suffer equally. This is an occasion in which we have to transcend barriers of religion and caste and rally together as human beings. Human beings are a single family."

A delegation from England led by Rev. Marcus Braybrooke, founder of the International Interfaith Centre, was in Gujarat when the earthquake struck. Rev. Braybrooke observed, "Perhaps we need more than ever

to ground our lives in the Spirit, in the Love which flows from God, and to take every moment and every opportunity to express that love. We have not time in this life to bear grievances, to harbor enmity. Perhaps we can learn from this that life is precious, a wonderful gift of God, and we are to use it to grow in love and fellowship, recognizing that there is one God whose love is for all of us."

Yuri Kluchnikov of Novozibirsk and his group of 16 Russians touring Indian holy places brought an exhibition of Russian children's artwork of the sun and Kirlian photographs of the auras of plants. They decided to donate the exhibition to be shown to the children of Gujarat, to help raise their spirits. He commented, "Our journey in India started in this holy place, Gobind Sadan, and our journey ends here. We went to the places of saints who have passed away, and here we met with a living saint, and this meeting has a great impact on us. A great astonishment for us was that Baba Virsa Singh teaches people to respect 'foreign' prophets as well as their own, because there are no foreign or own Gods—there is only one God.

We saw here how the fences between prophets are removed and thus the fences between people as well. There is so much talk in the world about love nowadays, but here we saw how it is not just talked about, but how it is realized and put into practice. I bow before Baba Virsa Singh for allowing us to feel the holiness of this place and the peace between people here."

Dr. Ausaf Ali, Director of Archives at Hamdard University, concluded, "When you come here to Gobind Sadan, you feel as though you are listening to a discourse on your own religion, because Babaji's religion is the religion of humanity. Anyone who comes to him and has a little time in his presence will feel reassured, will feel confident, and will feel inner peace. We have always loved him, we have always prayed for him, and we have tried to carry his message to humanity."

In his address to the meeting, His Holiness Baba Virsa Singh mentioned his recent very clear vision of the Prophet Mohammad: "I asked him why he experienced physical pain when receiving revelations. He replied, 'When a person meets the Great Power, it takes his breath away; he becomes unconscious.'"

With reference to the earthquake victims, Babaji said, "There can never be any danger to that inner light. It is all Love. God wants us to love each other, to help each other, to stand together in sorrow and in happiness. We all have one Father and we are all His family, no matter whether we follow Islam, or Christianity, or Hinduism, or Sikhism. His messengers keep coming to us so that we will know that He exists, whether we -call Him Allah, Paramatma, Ram, or the Great Power. God is so merciful, so powerful, that we should all remain happy, but we are not. We are always worried, for we have no faith in God. We should obey His orders and love Him. We should turn within and meditate in order to, as Buddha taught, purge our inner evils and bar evils coming from outside. Then, as it is written in the Guru Granth Sahib, 'You are me and I am You. There is no' difference between us.' The same thing is written in the Vedas, 'What You are, I am.' God is 'neti, neti'—beyond, beyond, beyond our ability to see or understand. But when we turn within, we begin to perceive God pervading everywhere, doing everything."

Guru Gobind Singh's Relics

In light of the earthquake, the celebration of Baba Virsa Singh's birthday from February 18 to 20 was subdued and simple. Its highlight was the displaying of the robe and comb of Guru Gobind Singh, the dress of one of his martyred sons, and other historical relics. The garments had come into the possession of the Nawab of Malerkotla, who then gave them to Sheikh Farid's lineage of Sufi Pirs in Bareilly. The garments were kept secretly. Nonetheless, when Baba Virsa Singh went to Bareilly in 1970, he mentioned the garments to someone who then told the Pir. Guru Gobind Singh came to the Pir in a dream and instructed him to personally go to Delhi to hand over the holy articles to Babaji, and he did so. When the relics were shown on Babaji's birthday, the congregation was so touched that many people wept. Among the guests who viewed the sacred relics was P. V. Narasima Rao, former Prime Minister of India.

Speaking on his birthday, Babaji appealed to the people of the world, "Boundaries should not be created in the name of religion. Otherwise we will remain entangled in a great fight that will never end. Everyone should remain firm in the faith in which they were born, but should never criticize other religions. Earn your living by working, obey God's commandments, and spread God's message. Only thus will we receive God's blessings."

Babaji Speaks Against Caste Divisions

In these times, Babaji is speaking out strongly against caste distinctions. He explains, "Our programme is not for any one religion. Our work is to unite the whole world, to create one society. There should be no caste divisions, no untouchability.

One day during meditation I had a vision: Why does this caste system exist? In whose ashram did Lord Ram's wife Sita dwell? That of Balmik, who belonged to a low caste. Where from did Mira receive enlightenment? From Bhagat Ravidas, the shoemaker. Who was Bhilni? She did not belong to a high caste, but she tasted berries before offering them to Lord Ram, to make sure they were sweet. By accepting them, Lord Ram did away with two traditional discriminations: that of caste and that of the taboo against food tasted by others.

What is happening today? Those who follow Lord Ram are entangled in the caste system, and so are those who follow Lord Krishna. We must wonder where this caste system has come from, when the pious Sita could stay with a low-caste person, and Mira, who was daughter of one king and daughter-in-law of another king, could go to the shoemaker Ravidas for enlightenment. Many pandits and scholars were living in that area, but why did Mira see Lord Krishna standing behind Bhagat Ravidas as he was making shoes? When she asked for Nam, he threw a drop of his leather-soaking water on her face, and she became enlightened.

During the time of Lord Ram, a tank of water had become very polluted. He asked the most prominent sage of the area to touch the water with his feet, but when he did so, the water became even more polluted.

Then the sages requested Lord Ram himself to touch the water with his feet, but even then the water did not become pure. However, Lord Ram had enlightened vision. He said, "Request Bhilni to put her feet in the polluted water." No sooner did she do so than it immediately became pure, to everyone's astonishment. What quality did Lord Ram believe in? Only love and faith. He did not care about the caste system.

Gurit Nanak said, "The four castes were made one." When Guru Gobind Singh began the rite of [amrit](#), he had the people sit in one line and drink from one bowl, thus ending both the caste system and the taboo against food tasted by others.

Today the caste system has created many divisions in society which were refuted by the prophets. In the government's reservation policy, job preference is given to low caste people who get only forty percent marks over others who score eighty percent. Why? We should eliminate the entire caste system and give places to competent people. When Lord Ram, Lord Krishna, and Guru Gobind Singh did not agree to the caste system, why should we? Or should we abandon the programme of the prophets and instead proceed according to our own programme?"

The True Ram Raj

The entire kitchen cabinet of the worldwide Hindu organization Vishwa Hindu Parishad came to His Holiness Baba Virsa Singh for a three-hour closed-door meeting on December 1st. The group was led by Sri Ashok Singhal, International Executive President of the VHP and B. L. Sharma Prem Singh Sher, Former MP and National Secretary of the VHP. They expressed to Babaji their concern about the deterioration of moral and religious values, and the subsequent increase in violence, crime, and corruption at all levels of society. They asked Babaji for his blessings and guidance for upholding dharma and India's heritage.

His Holiness said to them, "The same atma is in everyone, the same light. But these days we have strayed far from meditation and dharma. The people who believe in dharma are sitting alone in their homes or in the jungles, saying, 'Governance is not our job. It is the work of politicians.' To the contrary, social improvement is the work of righteous people, and it can be brought about only when morally upright, spiritually inclined people are involved in the governance of society.

We must be inspired by our scriptures, and struggle if necessary. When politics will be governed according to dharmic teachings, justice and love will prevail, and our country will be united. Ram Raj [the ideal society] will then truly manifest."

Babaji challenged the VHP leaders, "When you worship, do not stop until the deities appear. When we worship, I never assume that the deities will not come. Never think that puja is an ordinary thing, the deities actually come, and we ask them what we should do. Our country's weakness is that we think they have gone away."

Nine Days' Celebrations

At Gobind Sadan, people of many castes, creeds, and countries live, work, worship, and celebrate all the prophets' holy days together as brothers and sisters . From December 25 to January 2, people of all faiths gathered at Gobind Sadan for the community's massive nine-days' celebration of many religions' holy days: Christmas, Hanukkah, the Day of the Martyrs, Eid-ul-Fitr, and Guru Gobind Singh's birthday. Babaji explained, "Guru Gobind Singh never told me to be rigid or exclusive. I have firm faith, in every pore, that Guru Gobind Singh is happy with everyone whose heart is full of love, for Maharaj himself is very merciful and gracious. He is so beautiful, so tender, so filled with light that anyone who sees him can never remain in darkness. I have full faith that his nonsectarian mission will spread to the whole world.

Love is the greatest discipline. Never become so fanatic that you love your own prophet but criticize or think ill of others. No one who truly follows Guru Gobind Singh can be rigid and exclusive."

Guru Gobind Singh created the Khalsa in 1699 as an advance guard to protect the weak and down-trodden of all religions. His Holiness explained, "We only become Khalsa by becoming inwardly transformed, by protecting everyone. As Guru Gobind Singh boldly asserted, 'Mosques and temples are the same, Hindu Puja and Muslim Namaz are the same. Recognize all humanity as one human race.' He never spoke ill of any religion, and showered his love on Hindus and Muslims alike. He also ended the system of our castes, doing away with all distinctions of high and low when he created the Khalsa."

The Christmas programme on December 25th included bagpipe music, balloons, thousands of candles at Jesus's Place, Sikh [Kirtan](#), Christmas carols in Hindi, Punjabi, and English, traditional Russian music led by Vladimir Ivanovich Michulayev from the Russian Embassy, and lighting of the Hanukkah candles and Jewish prayer of the holy season by Rabbi Ezekiel Isaac Malekar.

During the Christmas programme, Babaji explained, "People may wonder why we are celebrating Christmas in a gurdwara. But this is truly religion, that Jesus's birthday should be celebrated in gurdwaras and the birthday of Guru Gobind Singh in churches. The holy days of Moses, of the Prophet Mohammad, of Jesus, of Lord Krishna, Lord Ram, Lord Buddha, Guru Nanak, Guru Gobind Singh, of all the prophets, should be celebrated in churches, in mosques, in temples, in gurdwaras. The prophets are one family of God. Some have come in one country, some in another. But they belong to its all. If we celebrate the day of our prophet and criticize others, it is my feeling that our prophet will not be pleased, and we will never become enlightened.

God has emphasized the same message through each prophet: 'Go and teach the people love, teach them how to live well, take away their fears and their evils.' When Jesus was crucified, he took all the people's troubles upon himself and made them good. Guru Gobind Singh struggled tremendously and fought difficult battles, only for the purpose of making people good; he, too, took all the people's difficulties upon himself and his family. He gave the people priceless freedom: He raised, them above their evils, cleansed their minds, and united them with truth. Where their minds were fearful, he inculcated fearlessness; where there was hatred, he replaced it with compassion. Moses gave up royal marriage to win the release of slaves. The Prophet Mohammad likewise sacrificed his whole family to create righteous believers. In essence, all prophets sacrificed to create good human beings.

I appeal to all communities, to all countries, to all who believe in their own religions: Let us respect all prophets in all our religious places, and people will automatically draw together and become secure. We will all recognize each other as our sisters and brothers. There is no other way of solving the world's conflicts."

[< Prev](#)

[Next >](#)

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