



Moscow Mayor seats Babaji in his own chair

In May, His Holiness Baba Virsa Singh made a remarkable three-week visit to Russia in which he met not only with thousands of loving devotees but also with business leaders, scientists, entertainment figures, and top government officials. To all of them he confirmed that his childhood visions of Russia's future as the most spiritual country in the world are now beginning to come true, and that it will again become a great economic power on the basis of its tremendous mineral wealth.

On May 13, Babaji gave a press conference at the prestigious House of Journalists in Moscow, telling a packed audience that Russians will "realize their spiritual destiny if they control their minds through meditation and find God inside themselves." He was introduced by Yuriy Ageshin, a member of the Presidium of the International Association for Peace through Culture, which organized the visit of His Holiness. Mr. Ageshin explained that when Babaji first visited Russia in 1989, he warned that the Soviet Union would fall apart if economic reforms were pushed too fast, but promised to return when Russia was ready to recognize its true mission. "That means that it is now time for massive changes," Mr. Ageshin concluded.

Babaji greeted many of his Russian admirers on May 14th in a lovely government country resort outside Moscow. He explained that the purpose of meeting was not to change anyone's religion but rather to develop good thoughts and the ability to see the power of God within everyone.

He said, "God is very tender-hearted. He wants everyone to be happy. It doesn't matter to God whether a person goes to a mosque, a church, a temple, or a gurdwara. No one religion is the best. God has made them all, and as every prophet has explained, He resides throughout the whole cosmos. Whatever holy place you go to, study love there. If you look through vision, you will see that God's Light is always falling on the whole world, but only a few people take it. Most pass it by without recognizing it."

On May 15th, Baba Virsa Singh spoke to another overflow audience on the subject of meditation. He explained, "Meditation helps us control our thoughts, and brings dharam to the world. Without dharam, no work can be done. Without dharam, there will be social chaos. When a river overflows its banks it does great damage to the surrounding areas, but when a person's mind is not controlled, he can destroy entire countries." Emphasizing concentration and cleansing of the mind, he said, "Meditation means knocking on God's door. He will surely open it. Why go to the jungles to find Him? He is sitting inside us. When we knock on His door, His Power will come forth within us."

Boris Grebentshikov, a famous popular singer who has often come to Gobind Sadan, spoke with Babaji afterward. Babaji described the abuses of religion by priests of all religions and encouraged him to courageously transcend manmade boundaries, speak of dharam, and sing about God's presence in all Creation.

In the evening, Academician Valderia Iman Porokhova presented Babaji with copies of her scholarly Russian translation of the Holy Qur'an and Hadith of the Prophet Muhammad. She bowed before Babaji, saying, "You are worth bowing to, so that is why I have come." He blessed her and reminded her to be sure to recite five Namaz every day.

May 16th was devoted to the subject of healing. Before Baba Virsa Singh came, Joginder Kaur of Gobind Sadan USA told of her healing from cancer with Babaji's support. Babaji spoke of all the prophets as healers. "Some cured diseases; some transformed thoughts. Both are necessary. Some people go to temples, gurdwaras, or churches for 70 or 80 years but never change. They are supposed to be places of healing. If the whole world is going to these places, why are anger and fear increasing? Perhaps these holy places have been turned into schools of blame and abuse. Now neither we nor society are happy. We must

throw out Satan. When you make him your guest, he gives you all his qualities—and they are not good qualities." By contrast, "God is a great Mother. The child may do wrong, but even then She clasps him to her breast. Let us all climb into Her lap. Why be afraid of that place where there is no high or low? She welcomes everyone, of every caste, creed, and country."

On the evening of May 17th, a television crew brought a scientist from Israel who posed a series of philosophical questions to Baba Virsa Singh. Babaji cautioned him, "The prophets come to give life—peace and progress. But now Jews have assumed authority, saying, 'We are Number One.' Christians say 'No, Jesus is Number One.' Muslims say 'Muhammad is Number One.' In our religious places we are teaching what our prophets forbade. We are challenging our prophets and misleading the people. According to me, God is straightforward, not a matter of philosophy. What is His language? Love." At the end, the scientist bowed before Babaji, saying, "I want to thank you. I want to learn so much and I have learned so much from you. I'm so thankful that in my life I have met you, a Mahapurakh." Babaji replied, "I say to God, 'I'm just Your child. This scientist is very well educated. He asks questions and You answer. So I'm learning and so is he.' I'm not the authority on these religions. When Muslims come I say to Mohammed, 'You please speak—this isn't my subject.' When Christians come, I ask Jesus to speak, and when Jews come, I make the same request to Moses."

On May 18, Baba Virsa Singh was presented by the Russian Academy of Russian Language and Literature with the rare and prestigious Pushkin Medal for his promoting cultural understanding. Then a troupe of Russian dancers and musicians entertained Babaji and the Indian delegation with traditional folk singing and dancing. Afterward, the famous and beloved actress Natalia Gundareva came forward in her wheelchair for Babaji's blessings. She had been crippled by a stroke two years earlier and had spent the past 5 months in the hospital. She held Babaji's hand for a long time, with tears in her eyes. He blessed her with spiritual practices through which the spirit of Jesus would heal her, and within a few days, her ability to move was increasing and her despair was giving way to happiness.

Babaji told the audience, "The time of darkness and conflict is over; the time of peace has come. Eliminate fear from your mind. Love has come. Your country will laugh a lot, and happiness will arise. You have said 'No God' for a long time. Now you will say, 'One God,' and Your Father will clasp you to His breast." After the programme, people asked Babaji about methods of meditation such as raising kundalini which have made some people crazy. He said firmly, "Some people have made a business of meditation. But clearly understand that meditation means love—calling your Mother, your Father. Let kundalini remain where it is. The 84 yogic asanas will lengthen your life, but a person may do them for years and then die without ever meeting God. Meet Him through love and stay happy."

Father Sergei, a Russian Orthodox priest, also came to meet Baba Virsa Singh after the programme on May 18th. Babaji asked him, "Why not celebrate the holiday of Moses in the church? Jesus said to turn the other cheek when someone slaps you, and to give your coat to someone who takes your shirt. Where did Jesus say, 'Bomb them. Keep Me in a fortress'? Jesus did not make any boundaries. People made them. He is in everything. If we shut him in a fortress, what will the oceans do? What will the trees do?"

On May 19th, Baba Virsa Singh was received with full honours by the influential Mayor of Moscow, Yuriy Luzhkov. Mr. Luzhkov requested Babaji, "Just as I have removed old buildings in order to widen the city's roads, please broaden the minds of our people."

Baba Virsa Singh was also received at Duma, the Russian parliament. He was introduced by Svetlana Smirnova, the Representative from Udmurt Republic and by Alexander Alexandrovich Tyagunov, Chairman of the Deputies' Group on Relationships with the Parliament of India. Mr. Tyagunov spoke of the increasingly close relationships between India and Russia and said, "We're very glad that such a great person has come to our country and is sitting in our Parliament." Babaji told the Duma members, "According to my vision, now is the time that great peace and progress will arise in your country. God will support your good thoughts. Cast out fear and pressure from your minds; you have befriended them too long. Remember, the country does not belong to only one person—the country consists of all of us. For the sake of progress, everyone should work and the law should be strictly followed. Then peace will come, conflicts will end, and the country will again return to its position as a great power. You will become very strong, for truth is always victorious. You should always fight against cruel oppression, but instead you are fighting against your neighbours. The holy scriptures say to love yourself and love others, but you are reading the scripture of Satan. When you read the holy scriptures, the light will go on and the darkness will leave."

May 20th is the day celebrated by Orthodox Christians as Jesus's Ascension Day, when Jesus bestowed spiritual power on his disciples and then returned to God. Babaji gave a long talk on the significance of this occasion, telling how much the people loved Jesus but how the priests of that time were against him and complained about him to the government, leading to his cruel crucifixion. He observed that it has always been the religious "authorities" who have opposed the prophets and who are stirring up conflicts between people of different religions even today. "Religion is not a matter of boundaries," he affirmed. "My programme is to increase your love for whatever religion you follow—I want you to love it more. Jesus does not live in a church or a temple. He is everywhere. He says, 'I have come to open all the sealed doors. I have come to tell you of the Father who is in the flowers, in the trees, in you.' Jesus is distressed when people say, 'He is ours.' He belongs to the whole world. You have made a habit of living in darkness. Today Jesus is distributing Light to the whole Creation. Receive its healing and go and distribute it to the entire world."

On May 22nd, scientists from many institutions came for a seminar entitled "Constructive Dialogue between Science and Religion." They gave speeches about their research for several hours and then their deep questions were compiled and given to Babaji. One of these was, "Will the world ever end?" Babaji replied, "No. It has no end or limit. Those who have searched for the Creator say there are millions of suns and planets and moons. There are fourteen planets with life on them. Scientists who study them will eventually discover that there are people there. They are very progressive, more scientific and peaceful and beautiful than us."

A farewell gathering was held on May 23rd. For several hours, hundreds of Russians and Indian delegates joined in a havan ceremony held outside. Around a fire made of Russian wood, and ghee and samagri brought from India, the Indian delegates recited Guru Gobind Singh's Jaap Sahib, followed by recitation of Jaap Sahib by the Russians in the Russian translation organized by Gobind Sadan. The havan had a deep impact on the participants and according to Baba Virsa Singh, it was helpful in invoking blessings for Russia's future. In addition to Jaap Sahib, Russian publishers have asked Gobind Sadan to arrange Russian translations of Guru Granth Sahib and Dasam Granth so that Russians can benefit from their spiritual wisdom.

Afterward, in a hall packed with loving well-wishers, Yuriy Agheshin said to Babaji, "We have all received strength from your visit. We will all remember your teachings—for me, especially your teachings on how to live together lovingly. Whatever difficulties we have will leave and Russia will become very rich and a great spiritual power." Babaji replied, "Understand that whatever I say, I say from vision. I ask Him who is much greater than the mind. He knows very well what is going on in the cosmos, what will happen, and how peace will arise. The sun and moon may stop, but what He has said will definitely come true. The current trends are very good for your country, and dharam will awaken in the whole world, for people have become tired of making errors." The programme concluded on a very happy note with traditional dance and music performances by highly talented children.



Babaji is introduced to Duma members

The final days of Baba Virsa Singh's visit were given to private audiences with government and business leaders, to help support progress and peace in the country. The famous singer Iosif Kobzon, leader of the artists' committee in Duma, came for his blessings. Babaji said to him, "Why is there conflict in the world today? People do not follow what is written in their scriptures. The Bible never said to fight, nor did the Torah, the Holy Qur'an, nor the Guru Granth Sahib. We should thank every one of God's messengers."

Television producer Olga Babaryka came to tape an interview with Babaji, which will be followed by more filming of his practical work in turning barren wastelands into flourishing farms in India. She asked him, "Why do you farm? Isn't this unusual for a spiritual leader?" He replied simply, "I am the son of a farmer. We were poor. We had to come up from the bottom. By the grace of God, we transformed barren lands with which the government could do nothing. I kept sharing everything—the power of God, the power of hard work. I never wanted to ask anyone to give me anything. I always felt that a person of God is one

who would undertake development in order to help the people. Thus langar (free kitchen) and recitation of scriptures keep going on, and the people in our communities are working 24 hours a day. Sometimes we feed thousands of people each day with the income from our farms and celebrate the holy days of all the prophets on a grand scale."

Babaji continued, "Look how many people sit idle in holy places. They have great houses, cars, and rich foods, and don't do any work. What is their relationship to God? Jesus's dress was very simple, and his sandals were broken. A person who follows Jesus would also be very simple, would be happy sitting under a tree. Religion is most loving. Its character is very high. There is no greed. A religious person sees no difference between the king and the king's driver. There is no high or low. I always feel that we are all brothers and sisters. As Guru Gobind Singh said, 'Recognize all people as one human race.'"

People gathered informally around Babaji again on May 30th, celebrated in Russia as Troitsa Day, the Day of the Holy Trinity. They sang and danced and then listened attentively as he explained, "Dharam is very simple and innocent—not philosophical. From a five-year-old child to a person 100 years old, everyone can understand the few simple principles: Love, receive healing, see your own faults rather than looking at others' faults, don't give others what you don't want for yourself. Remember that you are modeled after God. According to our traditional wisdom, of all the 8,400,000 forms of life, only human beings have the potential to achieve enlightenment. All other species obey God's order. But the human being doesn't. Twenty-four hours a day he proceeds according to his own ideas. God says, 'Take My form and go into the world,' but wherever people go, animals flee. God told him, 'Take love,' but he spreads fear. We should work hard, speak truth, and live so lovingly with others that we don't hurt anyone."

Several members of Duma came to the airport to say good-bye as Babaji left. One of them, Svetlana Smirnova, said, "I think Babaji is the Love, and he gives his love to many, many people. I am so happy that I met Babaji, and he gave me the opportunity to see into my soul, and to know myself. I think that Babaji gives the Russian people hope—hope for the future, and hope for themselves. And I believe that everything that Babaji said will be true. I hope and believe that it will be. I want so much that our Russian people will be happy, will be comfortable, because I think our people need it, and they deserve it."

On Violence and Religion

Several times during his Russian visit, Baba Virsa Singh spoke to reporters about the current international violence. When asked about the appeal of his message in a country formerly considered atheist, Babaji explained, "I say here with full conviction, 'Until people meditate, peace will never come to the world. Anger destroyed this country and caused tremendous unrest.' Here in Russia it is as if someone has been locked in jail for a long time. When the door is finally opened, they run out with great joy. By being told that there is no God, they were locked in a jail. Now they are free to say, 'Yes, God exists,' and they are all enjoying and celebrating their freedom."

Whenever I talk about meditation, they become totally in love with the idea and go out and write books about whatever I say and also show it on television. I can see from all these things that they will become very spiritual. Seeing them meditate is something that will change the whole future of the world. I have met people from all walks of life here and as yet, I have not seen anything that would indicate that there is any block to spirituality in this country. Their whole system will turn and thank God. They will also progress greatly as a country.

I appeal to all countries: If you say that you love God, then follow His orders. If you say, 'Jesus is ours,' then follow his teachings. Jesus would never accept someone's killing another person. If you have been stoned by someone, offer them flowers. If someone throws a stone, we should not shoot them with a machine gun. That makes Jesus very unhappy. Jesus says that if someone is beating you, turn to God and say, 'Oh God, please forgive them, forgive them, forgive them. They do not know what they are doing.' Leave war. Take the money that you are spending on war and help those in need. Give them good housing, good food, good education. Make medicines affordable. Do not destroy the progress that you have made in your country. Maintain it. Put the gifts that God has given you to good use. When you hurt somebody's feelings, Jesus becomes very unhappy. When you kill somebody, Jesus becomes very angry. Why should we make Jesus angry?

If you love Moses, follow his teachings and his example. Moses is the greatest example of sacrifice in order to help the weak. He renounced a kingdom to free the slaves. A true follower of Moses can never attack the weak or tolerate tyranny.

If you love Guru Gobind Singh, do as he did. His history is one of standing up for the weak. A true follower of Guru Gobind Singh can never observe any distinctions between high and low. He can never attack anyone's holy place. As Guru Gobind Singh said, "Mosque and temple are the same; puja and Namaz are the same. Let all people be recognized as one human race."

God is happy with those who are compassionate, not with those who are angry. Love everyone. Love all countries. Help them overcome their weaknesses. If there is poverty, send them medicine. If they have other weaknesses, educate them. Turn that river of wealth in other directions; turn off the supply for war. It is not good for any country. God is not happy, the public will not be happy, and you will not be happy."

A reporter asked, "Why is there so much terrorism among Muslims? Is it because of their religion?" Babaji answered, "The Holy Qur'an teaches us to love our neighbour, to love everyone. It says to fight for Allah's sake, but what is the jihad of Allah? To rescue anyone who is oppressed, to defend those who are being threatened or hurt. The Holy Qur'an says that a kafir (unbeliever) is one who suppresses the truth, whereas a mu'min (believer) is one who bears witness to the truth. To the Prophet Muhammad, it is not a question of being a Muslim, a Jew, a Sikh, or a Hindu. He is talking about people's virtues. Any Muslim who kills or puts pressure on others is by definition a kafir. And anyone who is kind to others, who thinks how to help others, who always sees the light of God in others is a true mu'min. Anyone who fights from enmity, from jealousy is going against Islam. When we speak of the 'jihad of Allah,' we mean that one does not fight for one's fame, nor worry about being criticized; nor should the struggle be for the sake of any nation or race but simply to save people from oppression, to make the weak strong, to give power to the poor, no matter what religion they follow. Then you can say that the fight is for Allah.

Many people have become terrorists. One person drops a bomb and blows up an entire city. What could he be called? A terrorist—a big terrorist. Another person sets off a bomb in the market and kills two hundred people, and the newspaper calls him a terrorist. Whether a person comes out of the jungle and throws a bomb or lives in the city and drops bombs from an airplane, both are terrorists. Both sides kill each other, but only one side is labeled terrorist. The press is afraid to challenge the strong so they all go after the weak.

A terrorist is one who kills people, creates fear in people, puts pressure on people, and plunders their resources. A person who takes bribes, who takes away people's rights, who threatens or suppresses people, or who creates laws in his own self-interest is also a terrorist, because he spreads fear. We cannot say that terrorism is being spread only by young people. Somewhere a war is raging. Big artillery guns are being fired and people are being killed. Whole countries are committing terrorism. In one house, someone is dead and the children are crying; this is all terrorism. It spreads fear which is like slow suicide. Somewhere mosques are being destroyed; somewhere temples, churches, or synagogues are being destroyed. Terrorism has cast its shadow over the whole world.

This is not a question of Muslim, Sikh, Hindu, Jewish, or Christian extremism. This kind of conduct is prohibited in every scripture, be it the Bible, the Torah, the Qur'an, the Zend Avesta, or the Guru Granth Sahib. The people who are criticizing terrorism, who are holding meetings to determine how to stop terrorism, should first stop and look into themselves. Are not they themselves committing terrorism? We should first remove the terrorism within ourselves. We should give up anger and desire for revenge, should forsake the idea of bombing countries. Only then will there be peace and cooling in the world. When Babar was terrorizing the people of India, Guru Nanak said, "You are not Babar, you are Zabbar (one who grabs forcibly), you are kafir (non-believer). If a powerful person kills a powerful person, there is no grief in my heart, but you are killing the weak. So I humbly pray to God, 'The people are being beaten so badly; did You not feel any pain?'"

Terrorism is not a matter of one religion; no one is obeying the teachings of their own prophets. If the rulers and influential people in countries will act according to the teachings of their prophets, peace will come automatically.

Seminar on Righteous Work

"So many people are dying these days for lack of medical care, since they cannot afford it. Many people do not have enough food. But the rich are not ready to help the poor. These great difficulties will not be solved until dharmic principles of hard work and sharing are restored. And they will not be restored until we meditate." With these words, Baba Virsa Singh opened an international seminar on the subject of "Righteous Work ("Kirat"): Its Spiritual Roots and Social Effects," which was held by the Gobind Sadan Institute for Advanced Studies in Comparative Religion from 18 to 20 February. The seminar brought together renowned educators, government leaders, religious leaders, businesspeople, scholars, scientists, and social workers from India, United States, Russia, Germany, and England to study the relationships between hard work and religion, in an effort to encourage people to work diligently and honestly and at the same time, mitigate the greed and exploitation which are increasing the gap between rich and poor worldwide, bringing unemployment, despair, and social unrest rather than harmony and prosperity.

The esteemed President of the Gobind Sadan Institute, Swaranjit Singh, gave the welcome address in which he explained, "The Gobind Sadan Institute for Advanced Studies in Comparative Religion was started in 1988, and has been holding seminars and conferences on various subjects under the spiritual and visionary guidance of His Holiness Baba Virsa Singh Ji. Today we are blessed that we have in our presence Baba Virsa Singh Ji, whom we lovingly call Babaji. Though he has never been to school, and cannot read or write, all Babaji's great knowledge is visionary, and his wisdom immense. Those who become part of Babaji's mission tend to work four times harder than anyone else. The power that comes from the love of God via Babaji brings that work ethic and the strength to follow it. Babaji has always emphasized the importance of hard work, and he in his own way infuses the faith and power which results in the extra effort that an individual gets to work beyond human understanding. We have seen Babaji work for over 18 hours a day continuously month after month when this place was being developed. The source of his boundless energy could only come through his spiritual resources."

The seminar was inaugurated by Dr. Murli Manohar Joshi, who was then Union Minister for Human Resources Development. He pointed out that one-sixth of the world's population controls eighty percent of the global wealth. "In this imbalance," he asserted, "there is no righteousness, no spirituality. This deep social division has arisen because we have forgotten the spirit of righteous work." Other noteworthy speakers at the inaugural session included Dr. Rostislav Rybakov (Director of Institute of Oriental Studies, Moscow), Sri Vachaspati Upadhaya (Vice Chancellor, Sri Lal Bahadur Shastri Rashtriya Sanskrit Vidyapeeth), Tarlochan Singh (Chairman of Minorities Commission, Government of India), Akhtar-ul-Wasey (Director of Zakir Hussain Department of Islamic Studies, Jamia Millia University), Svetlana Smirnova (Duma Deputy from Russia), Maria Amanchina (shamaness from Siberia), Tom Thorkelson (Mormon Bishop from California), Ralph Singh (founding President of Gobind Sadan USA), Gurbachan Singh (President of Gobind Sadan USA), Bhai Kirpal Singh (head researcher, Gobind Sadan), and Gurcharan Kaur (Manager, Gobind Sadan).

On the occasion, His Holiness Baba Virsa Singh also presented "Kirat Awards" to four luminaries of Indian society: Dr. Khem Singh Gill, former Vice Chancellor of Punjab Agricultural University and one of the leading scientists of the Green Revolution, Dr. Tirath Singh, a renowned homeopathic doctor who has devoted much of his life to serving the poor, D. S. Brar, CEO of Ranbaxy Laboratories, and Former Chief Justice of India B. N. Kirpal. The citations on the plaques honour them for their "continuous, selfless, dedicated work for humanity with deep spiritual devotion to God."

In his address, Baba Virsa Singh drew on the practical experience of Gobind Sadan, in which he has for decades emphasized the importance of hard work linked to faith in God as the proper basis for development. He has thus developed thousands of acres of barren wastelands in India into flourishing farms to support Gobind Sadan's charitable work, providing employment, medical services, food, shelter, clothing, education, and access to government services to the hardworking poor.

In the seminar panels held on 19th and 20th February, international delegates explored the religious roots of righteous work, the effects of righteous work on the individual and on society, the question of whether businesspeople and government officials can maintain righteousness in their work, and the importance of inculcating work ethic with spirituality for the young. Speaking from their own religious traditions, cultures, and professional experiences, all agreed on the necessity for teaching the dignity of honest labour and incorruptible service to society. This valuable material is being transcribed for posting on Gobind Sadan's website, www.gobindsadan.org.

A Sad Farewell to Swaranjit Singh

The Gobind Sadan Institute for Advanced Studies in Comparative Religion has sadly bid farewell to our highly respected President, Swaranjit Singh, who recently passed away at the age of 82. Son of Sardar Bahadur Gurbax Singh, OBE, Swaranjit Singh had led the Institute with great dedication and wisdom since its creation. He had been a pillar of Gobind Sadan since its inception, donating the first tractor in 1971, and an ever-faithful devotee of Baba Virsa Singh since he first met him in 1968. He was Gobind Sadan's leading "Ambassador." Much of the groundwork for the success of Babaji's recent trip to Russia we owe to him—for he sowed the seeds for Babaji's mission when he single-handedly escorted Babaji to Russia in 1989. He was a world-renowned engineer and retired as a Founder-Director of Escorts Ltd., one of the largest industries in North India. Gobind Sadan will miss him greatly and always remember his dedicated service, and extends its loving condolences to his bereaved family. Speaking to his family, Baba Virsa Singh said, "Thank God that He sent such a good person, into such a good family, and then took him so peacefully. We made him President of our Societies, and he always gave the welcoming speeches. He was the one who opened the door to Russia, and now they welcomed us with so much love. We really miss him. We always felt that he was the elder of our house."

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