



Eight-day Birthday Celebration

From February 18 to 25, Gobind Sadan's sangat celebrated the birthday of its beloved teacher Baba Virsa Singh with great love and enthusiasm. Six Akhand Paths (continuous readings of the Guru Granth Sahib) and special havan (sacred fire) were conducted night and day throughout the period, and [Kirtan](#) (sacred singing) often filled the air. Many poets came to share the poetry they had written about Babaji, and scholars came from far and wide to a seminar on Dasam Granth (the collected writings of Guru Gobind Singh, the Tenth Sikh Guru) and an international forum on Enlightened Development.

As devotees from Russia, Kazakhstan, the United States, India, and other countries converged to celebrate the birthday of their beloved Baba Virsa Singh, Babaji stressed that the main focus of the celebration should be tapasya, or spiritual practice. To complement the 24-hour-a-day prayer cycle, nightly programs showcased Punjabi culture, capped by a four-hour tribute to Babaji by Punjab's most famous popular singer, Gurdas Mann.

When each Guru Granth Sahib was opened randomly, as is traditional, each passage which forms the special divine orders for the community appeared from the Fifth Guru, Guru Arjun Dev, including this favorite hymn from Guru Granth Sahib page 701 that reflected devotees' gratitude toward Baba Virsa Singh: "Ko-ee jan har si-o dayvai jor" (If only someone will unite me with the Lord, I will hold fast to his feet, utter sweet words, and offer my life to him.)

Photos of the multi-faceted celebration and a summary of the Dasam Granth seminar have been posted on www.gobindsadan.org, and highlights of the Enlightened Development forum are enclosed herein.

Work and Meditate to Find the Path Out

During the birthday celebrations, Babaji gave a private audience to participants in the Enlightened Development forum. Babaji began the dialogue by speaking of religious conversion:

There is a movement in the world today to convert people to another religion. From the very beginning, I have opposed this. What religion is there to change? I have been against this practice from my childhood, when I did not even have a beard.

We have given great respect to all religious traditions. You will see that people pray to Jesus 24 hours a day here. They stand and sing his praises. So when people say that we should become Christian, I ask, "What do you mean by Christian? Do you mean that I have to follow your orders? I don't wear a cross, and I'm not a Christian, but Jesus came and met me here. He gave me great blessings, great boons."

I'll give you a small example. Two young people came. They were both blind. I told Mary to take them to Jesus, and tell Jesus very simply and directly, with love: "You are the one who gives sight to the blind, makes the cripples climb mountains. Please do the same for them. They need to see." Now they do, for this is the nature of Jesus.

The scientist and the one who loves God have very much in common. You will see that after a little while, scientists will discover 14 planets where very good human beings live. Their science is very advanced.

So remain happy and laugh. Don't think about your age. You will see that soon the average person will live 100 years. There are many 90-year-old people today who are enjoying their full lifestyle. But just keep faith. If you doubt, you will become worried.

Q: When you speak about work, do you mean work with our minds, thinking, or with our hands?

A: Link your minds to God and work with your hands. If you do not apply your minds, what kind of work will you produce? But if you do not work, your minds will create mischief for you.

Q: We look at the conditions of the world-- terrorism and conflicts, poverty, environmental degradation, pollution of the landscape, air pollution, major climate changes. Even though we scientists have shown that we humans have made major mistakes, the people still continue with their current practices and do not accept this lesson. What future can we expect?

A: Work and meditate and you will find the path out. The darkness will run away. I see good times ahead. The more the world is burning, the more rain God will send to put out the fire. I do not want you to worry. Everything will change.

One day the three great powers will come together. Write it in your diaries: China, Russia, and America. When the three come together,

the times will begin to change for good. No one will be left out.

Q: Maharaj ji, I am so happy sitting among these brothers and sisters. You have brought these people together but it doesn't seem that they have come from Russia. They have been my brothers and sisters for many births. It feels that they really are our family and that the borders of the world have disappeared. Please bless us that our sense of differences goes away so we can live together as one family.

A: What you are feeling will increase. That feeling will not leave.

Q: Our media are sick. They only show the dark side of life, the wars, the killings, and the crime. There are many good things happening as well. How do we cure the media so they project a better society?

A: They will change. They are writing about our work here, for instance. First change yourself. When they see how you have changed, they will also change. Instead of worrying about how to change them, why not spend the time changing yourself? Then you will see the change in the world.

Q: When people receive a certain level of income, beyond their basic needs, they develop culturally and spiritually. Then in poorer countries, we have found that people have to spend all their time thinking about tomorrow, simply worried about survival—with the exception of India. Despite the fact that they are poor, many of the people here are happy and enlightened. How and why does this happen? And what can we learn from them?

A: They are like tigers. A tiger may live alone in the jungle. Whenever he steps out of the jungle and roars, the other animals tremble with fear. Don't think of people as poor. They are like tigers, and those who aren't worried about material things make very loyal friends. You can learn from those who are happy even though they may be poor that you should also be happy and not worry about what you have.

On Enlightened Development

During the international forum on "Enlightened Development: Making Capitalism Inclusive," Babaji said,

For enlightened development, we must first develop our own consciousness. Everything must start with meditation. Without meditation, you will not be able to recognize what is happening in the world, you will not perceive spiritual power, and you will not even understand your own nature. Meditation is such a power that you can understand what goes on around you, perceive the force within you, and even understand every person's nature.

I will share this small example that you can see for yourselves. When I was a young man and did not even have a beard yet, the vision came to me that Russia would one day become a very spiritual country. I had never even heard of Russia. When I asked someone about Russia, they told me, "If you take the name of God in Russia they will kill you." But I told them what I had seen in my vision. And when I went to Russia I found proof that spiritual power is literally erupting in Russia. There was so much evidence that even in the average person I could see spirituality. I could see love, and faith, and truth within each one.

The whole world is crying, "Let's get rid of poverty," and every country, every organization puts forth its own speakers, but poverty still continues unabated. So let us understand that poverty does not really exist. With full faith, I want you to realize this.

I am not from a rich family. I came from a very poor family where we never had enough to eat. But I made up my mind that I should not beg from anyone. I thought, "Let's get up and work, share with the people, and feed ourselves." Now I can tell you that I have a surplus of everything, and everything I have is for the people. We organize medical camps, bring doctors, provide food, and I go and preach for the uplift of those in need.

Raise yourself so high that God comes and asks, "What can I do for you? What do you need?" Why run after people? I have full faith that one day the current conditions will change and you yourselves will see a change in the world. This is God's mission and mine.

One day it will happen because God wants poverty to be eliminated. God will listen to your prayers. When I went to Russia I saw that people don't work. They think, "The ruler will give us a home, feed us, and take care of all our needs." That is why poverty has spread throughout the country. Forget these ideas. The rulers are our management. Cooperate with them, work along with them, and they too will change and wealth will come if you begin to work. What is government? We are all government.

There is no poverty. This is something we have created. It has no basis, no roots. Get rid of it. Share with those in need. Those who become rich are sitting comfortably on their wealth. Why? That is not God's teaching. What are you going to do hoarding your wealth? If one of your children is irresponsible, he will misuse all your wealth and you will be left with nothing. And when you die, you will be beaten. They will tell you, "You never did anything for the world." Here people may salute you, but there you will be beaten. They will question you, "When you received all this, you were told to share. Why didn't you do it?" Share your thoughts. Share your work. You will have to work. If you don't work, even those things which you have will one day be exhausted. Share whatever God has given you. Work with the poor and share among yourselves.

If you want to become good human beings, you will live by this simple formula: Respect those who have more, make friends with those on the same level, and show kindness to those beneath you. You will never be disappointed. You will always live happily.

People are responsible for the events in the world. One good person stands up and the whole world changes. The majority has never brought change to the world. Whenever the world has changed, it is because of those of quality. What is the majority? Sheep are standing in the field. One lion appears and roars and half of them die from fear. So do not look at numbers; develop quality.

Take God's blessings. Your door to God is closed, and you have left the door of your mind wide open. Your mind will only create worry for you. You cannot see beyond your own limited thoughts.

Share all you have. Don't grasp it tightly to yourself. You do not know what will happen tomorrow. The Gurus say, "After a person dies, we don't even keep the dead body for a few minutes." "Even the little hut is blessed where one sings God's praises. The mansions are worthless where God is forgotten." Those who try to clutch their wealth become so bound they cannot even breathe. Be free. See God everywhere. Guru Gobind Singh said God is omnipresent—"In the water, in the earth, near and far." Jesus said, "My Father is the Ruler of all creation. He is providing everything that we need. You are all so worried about your dress. Look at the lily—who gave it clothes? You want to look beautiful. See how soft and beautiful, how delicate the lily is."

Have faith. If you don't have faith, you have nothing. If you have faith, God will walk with you.

Babaji's Influence

The keynote speaker at the Enlightened Development Forum was Dr. Naresh Singh, Executive Director of the UNDP Commission on Legal Empowerment of the Poor, one of the world's foremost experts on poverty reduction. He had met Babaji on an airplane 14 years earlier, when he spent the entire journey asking his deepest questions and receiving answers that he says changed his life as well as his career.

Naresh had been a renowned environmental scientist. As he told the Forum, when he was taken to meet Babaji on the plane, Babaji remarked, "You have been thinking of changing your career, haven't you?" I said, "Well, yes, but how do you know that?" I was quite a young and rude scientist at that time. He said, "I know what you are thinking about. You are thinking about starting to work on poverty." Confounded, I said, "Yes, I am, but the problem is that I know nothing about poverty." He said, "That is not a problem, because you will be able to bring your work on the environment and poverty together." In two or three weeks I had several offers from universities and research institutes, and I ended up becoming a program director for poverty and empowerment at one of the most prestigious institutes in Canada. The problem was that I knew nothing about poverty, but somehow these people decided to appoint me as the program director for this project. I started the work, and it was not easy. One of the things I have to share with you is that when Babaji takes you into His fold and decides to guide you, while the work is joyful, it is never easy.

In coming to Baba Virsa Singh 14 years ago, I have learned that we become mere instruments for a higher energy that works through us to make change that we desire to have. It is not we who are the agents of that change, but rather, we are the vessels and the channels through which that change is made.

The first thing He taught me when I sat at His feet was, "Your mind is like a racehorse without reins. It is jumping around in all kinds of different directions. The first thing you have to do is to calm that." I still struggle with that process and it still races out of control from time to time. Each one of us will be able to contribute to poverty eradication by first transforming ourselves and becoming that channel. But you cannot become that channel until the racehorse of the mind has become quiet and the reins are firmly in place.

I asked Him, "Can I become like you? Can I become a saint? I am a scientist; are scientists allowed to become saints?" He said to me, "There is no difference between a saint and a scientist. If the scientist is focused on the same goals as the saint, then only the pathways they take are different. So you don't have to become a saint; you can be a saint and a scientist at the same time."

If we want to help the world get rid of poverty, then we should not be focusing so much on the needs of the poor, because I believe that is a disempowering thing to do. I believe that we must begin with the assets around us. If you look at Babaji's work, He looks at what assets are there and then He transforms those assets into people's prosperity. That somehow became the cornerstone of my own work.

The real problem of poverty is the problem of power. Economic and social deprivation merely result from skewed power relations, where a very small proportion have power, and the large majority do not have any control over the forces of their lives. The problem is not money. The world is full of that. The problem is the political will to change the power relations between those who do not have and those who have. When you look at the history of human civilization you will find that those who have power have never given power willingly to those who do not have. Either the poor will take power by violent revolution or we will have to find a peaceful way in which we will change those power relations. For this kind of transformation, I am using the guidance and the strength that Babaji directs my way."

Celebrations

Gobind Sadan continues to celebrate the holy days of all religions with great fervor and joy. The new octagonal pavilion with touching life-sized stone statues of Buddha and Mahavir was the venue for the celebration of Mahavir's birthday on March 31st. Guest of honor

Swami Dharamananda of Adhyatmik Sadhana Kendra and 13-year-old Inderpreet Kaur spoke so convincingly about Jain ethics that all present wanted to adopt them.

Christmas and Guru Gobind Singh's birthdays were celebrated with special lighting programs, candles, special langar, kirtan, talks, and great love. For Baisakhi, Gurdaspur's sangat sang and danced far into the night, and Major Sahib gave a major talk about the founding of the Khalsa. He affirmed, "Guru Gobind Singh prepared the holy nectar by stirring water in an iron bowl with a khanda (double-edged sword), because khanda represents power (both worldly and spiritual). When the water is stirred with khanda while Gurbani is recited, its impact goes into the water and it becomes amrit (holy nectar). Then whomsoever it is given to becomes brave. Historically, Sikhs went through many problems but they always withstood them faithfully because they had taken the amrit of Guru Gobind Singh Ji, by which they developed inner courage. They forgot everything else, remembering only Guru Gobind Singh. When Guru Ji was preparing the amrit, Mata Jeeto Ji added sugar pieces to it. Guru Ji declared that sweetness and love had been combined with power and bravery. On that day, Guru Gobind Singh Ji also blessed two colours for Sikhs: saffron orange and royal blue. Both are the colours of bravery, but blue especially means those brave ones who selflessly help others."

The Invisible Hand

Professor Parmjit Singh of Toronto was among the sevadars who had come for a weekend of seva and devotions at Gobind Sadan USA, north of Syracuse, New York. At the end of the weekend he had this extraordinary experience: "On 8th July, I was cutting the large branches of a very old tree near the edge of Gobind Sadan USA's driveway. I was standing at a height of 8 feet on the tree to do the task. A 7-foot-long step ladder was used to climb up. After the cut with the chain saw, the large branches were falling down. I requested my companions to clear the area near the tree. They took all tools, including the step ladder, to the store room. Everybody was busy in getting ready to go back to their homes. Because of their hurry, they forgot about me. I called for help. One person went to the store room to bring the ladder, but I was not aware of that. I was looking around me towards the cut branches. At about 10 feet height, the largest cut branch was hanging with a little part still intact with the tree. Near that cut I saw "Dhan Dhan Maharaj Ji's hand." I was stunned and blanked out and started sliding down that branch. In a few moments I was standing on the ground, and tears started from my eyes. I went inside the Guru Ghar and told Editor Sahib about this. The person who brought the step ladder back was looking for me on the tree. He was stunned when he didn't see me there." Editor Sahib (Gurbachan Singh, manager of Gobind Sadan USA) writes, "Everybody here is hailing the spiritual power of Maharaj Ji."

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