



## Lil Faider Scholar-in-Residence Dr. Harjot Kaur Singh

I am honored to be participating in the inaugural year of the Lil Faider Interfaith Scholar-in-Residence program to teach the Beth Tzedec congregation about the Sikh Religion. As a practicing family physician and Chair of the Alberta Health Services Spiritual Care Advisory Committee for the Calgary Zone, I have a keen interest in interfaith education and promoting the wellness of an individual by addressing not only the biological, psychological, and sociological perspective but also the spiritual perspectives of health.

Sikhs have a distinct appearance with turbans and beards along with the five Articles of Faith, and during the tenure of this Scholar-in-Residence program, we will be delving into why the need for the distinct appearance, why the five articles (with the most popular being the Kirpan), as well as philosophy and scripture, woman's issues, and also delving into even practical things- such as how to tie a turban and how to cook some East Indian food.

The Sikh religion is the fifth largest world religion but is one of the youngest being only about 544 years old. Started by the first Sikh Guru, Guru Nanak Dev Ji, in 1469 in Northern India, the Sikh religion has approximately 22 million followers worldwide. Guru Nanak Dev Ji travelled throughout India and South East Asia teaching about a monotheistic religion with a belief in the One God. The key tenants of the Sikh faith are to meditate on God, to earn one's living honorably and honestly and to share and serve those who are in need.

The definition of a Sikh is to be a disciple who learns and whose most important goal is to seek the truth. In the Sikh religion, the human soul is believed to be inherently good although it is marred by mistakes and faults; it is believed that a soul can evolve spiritually by practising the main Sikh tenants while living a normal householder lifestyle and rising in the ambrosial hours of the morning to meditate. The concept of Sikh living encompasses the practice of moral, social and ethical responsibility for the individual to become closer to the truth with the evolution of the soul through reincarnation. Guru Nanak passed the light and leadership to nine other Sikh Gurus and ultimately to the Sikh Scriptures, the Siri Guru Granth Sahib Ji.

In the month of October, Sikhs celebrate the birthday of Guru Ram Das Ji, the

fourth Sikh Guru. He is known for the establishment of the Harmander Sahib or more popularly known, the Golden Temple. When Guru Ram Das Ji was the Guru, he learned of one of his Sikhs who was traveling and came upon a pool of water in which he bathed and healed his leprosy ridden body. Guru Ram Das Ji sanctified the pool of water by constructing a temple of gold in the middle with a walkway around it having four doors signifying it would welcome *ALL* people from the four corners of the world. Today in northern India, the city of Amritsar is where the Harmander Sahib is located and is one of the holiest Gurdwaras (Temples) of the Sikh Faith. Harmander Sahib means "God's Earthly Abode" and here the faithful, in the hundreds of thousands daily, come to pray, to bow, and to take a sip and dip in the holy waters and be healed. The Harmander Sahib is where the five elements are respected-the earth- being cleaned twice daily by washing the walkways, the water- being considered the Amrit Sarovar (the" pool of sweet Divine nectar") to take a sip and dip in, the fire or light- which is the Jyot which is burning constantly in the inner sanctum, the air- where the prayers and hymns are being constantly sung, and the ether-with the vibration of the sound current purifies all the elements and gives it healing qualities.

The Harmander Sahib also feeds 100,000 faithful daily with the Guru's Langar (Blessed Food) and on special celebration days up to 400,000 are fed. Langar is an important component of any Sikh Gurdwara; to feed the congregation and take care of a basic need while having all the congregation- whether poor or wealthy- sit together as equals to eat.

I visit the Harmander Sahib each year to meditate and "recharge my batteries" for the year. It is a blessing to sit and meditate in the inner sanctum in the early hours of the morning to connect with the Divine and heal my body, mind and soul. If you ever have the opportunity to visit the Harmander Sahib while in India, it is a must. The vibrations of the sound current and prayer elevate you automatically to a level of peace and healing.

I look forward to sharing more of my experiences with you in my journey and with my religion so that we can celebrate the unique but common Divine connection that we have and experience in each of our religious traditions. Waheguru Ji Ka Khalsa, Waheguru Ji Ki Fateh!  
(The Pure Ones belong to the Almighty, All Victory is that of the Almighty)

*Dr. Harjot Kaur Singh*

Lil Faider Interfaith Scholar-in-Residence



## Lil Faider Scholar-in-Residence Dr. Harjot Kaur Singh

The month of November is very important for the Sikh Religion as it marks the celebration of Siri Guru Nanak Dev Ji, the first Sikh Guru's Birthday. Siri Guru Nanak Dev Ji was born on the full moon of the lunar calendar in the month of November in 1469 in the village of Talwandi now in modern day Pakistan. This year, the date of the full moon falls on November 17th. All over the world Sikhs will be celebrating the entire week and even month, in anticipation of this Gurburab (birthday of the Guru).

It is very appropriate that Siri Guru Nanak Dev Ji was born on the evening of the full moon as proclaimed in the scriptures, "when Satguru Nanak took birth on the earth, it was like the Light of Wisdom came from the Divine to illuminate the consciousness of mankind." Even at a very young age, it was noted that Siri Guru Nanak Dev Ji was different than most children. His first teacher brought him home on the first day telling his parents that the young Nanak could not be taught. When asked why, the teacher explained how young Nanak was teaching him about the Divine Creator. At the age of 38, Siri Guru Nanak Dev Ji received Divine instruction while bathing in the River Beas to direct and illuminate others. After three days in the river, when everyone feared he was drowned, Siri Guru Nanak Dev Ji emerged speaking of the One Creator and His mission. Siri Guru Nanak Dev Ji traveled throughout India, Southeast Asia including some of China, and throughout the Arab world in five Udasi's or journey's totaling 28000km by foot, spreading the message of the equality of all humankind, peace and acceptance of all religions, compassion, righteousness and truth. The message became known as Sikhism and the followers became known as Sikhs. This also gave rise to the three basic tenants of the Sikh religion: Meditate on God's Name, Earning a living through honest and honorable means and Share and serve those in need.

Siri Guru Nanak Dev Ji was the first Interfaith Visionary who traveled with both Hindu and Muslim companions. As he traveled and preached, Siri Guru Nanak Dev Ji commented on the social and ethnic consciousness of the time. There was a poverty and inequality of consciousness that existed in Indian society. The caste system was so oppressive that the lower castes were not even allowed to chant God's name or meditate, there was constant fighting amongst the two majority religions of the time -Hinduism and Islam, and there was social inequality and injustice especially towards woman. As a social reformer, he upheld the cause of woman, the downtrodden and the poor. He also stressed the importance of being a householder -married with family- and maintained that spiritual enlightenment was attainable to all. Siri Guru Nanak Dev Ji himself was married with two sons.

Everywhere Siri Guru Nanak Dev Ji went, he composed the hymns of Gurbani which came to him directly from the Divine. Siri Guru Nanak Dev Ji stated "As the scripture

comes to me, O Lalo, so do I speak it". In total he composed 974 hymns which are in the Siri Guru Granth Sahib Ji, the Supreme Authority and final Guru for the Sikhs. He composed the Mool Mantra in which the attributes of the Divine Creator are discussed – "There is but One God, In Truth lies His Name and Identity, He is Himself Creating, He is without fear, He is without Enmity, Formless, Without Birth, Self-Sustaining, By the Blessing of Illumination, Recite, This is True from the Beginning, It is True now and says Nanak, it shall be True forever." He also composed the Japji Sahib which is the "Song of the Soul". Both of these hymns are the very first scriptures of the Siri Guru Granth Sahib Ji. Siri Guru Nanak Dev Ji also addressed the status of women some 500 years prior to woman achieving the right to vote on the North American subcontinent by writing – "Man is born of woman, befriends her, marries her and generations continue due to her....why call her bad or low when it is she who gives birth to all men and even kings."

Siri Guru Nanak Dev Ji stopped traveling and settled during the last part of his life and when he was ready to leave his body, he passed the Guruship to Siri Guru Angad Dev Ji, the second Guru of the Sikhs in 1539.

In the month of November, Sikhs also celebrate Bandi Chord Diwas (Guru as the Liberator) on the same day as the Hindu festival of Diwali. On this night, the sixth Sikh Guru, Siri Guru Hargobind Sahib Ji returned back to the Golden Temple after being imprisoned by the Muslim Emperor Jahagir and when released, the Guru also secured the release of 52 imprisoned Hindu Hill Princes who opposed the emperor. The entire Golden Temple complex is lit up with lights and candles light the walkways around the inner sanctum. A spectacular fireworks display augments the lights with the vibration of the sacred sound current and hymns playing in the background. It is a very special celebration for Sikhs to remember the release of the Guru.

I am in India to participate in both of these celebrations this year and I consider myself very fortunate to sit and meditate in the sacred vibration of prayer at the Harmander Sahib (Golden Temple) to uplift my body, mind and soul and recharge my batteries. I will connect with you all once I am back with our ongoing program for the interfaith program.

Waheguru Ji Ka Khalsa, Waheguru Ji Ki Fateh!  
(The Pure Ones belong to the Almighty; All Victory is that of the Almighty)

Shalom!

*Dr. Harjot Kaur Singh*

Lil Faider Interfaith Scholar-in-Residence





## Lil Faider Scholar-in-Residence Dr. Harjot Kaur Singh

The holiday season is soon upon us and the pervasiveness of Christmas is everywhere. As I traveled back from India, I was struck at how the entire world, especially the retail world, prepares for the season with the Christmas trees up in the airports and the shops advertising gift giving, even in middle of November. It does not matter what religion you are or where you are in the world, you are surrounded by Christmas. Most Sikhs, in North America and abroad, will celebrate Christmas in the more cultural sense of the holiday with giving of gifts and perhaps having Christmas lights on the house or decorating of the tree. I have been in India during the Christmas season, and in Punjab, Christmas is respected by school holidays and there may be some giving of gifts although it is much less pervasive. The Sikh religion does teach a respect for all religions and their practices. Personally, I do observe Christmas in the sense that I respect the significance of Christmas Eve with the birth of Christ and the fact that so many people around the world are actively engaged in prayer. I feel it is a wonderful chance to participate in the global vibration of prayer of so many people that permeates the earth at the same time.

However, for Sikhs, the December holidays mark a remembrance of a very different kind - that of Martyrdom. As a relatively young religion of only 550 years, the popularity and revolutionary ideas of Siri Guru Nanak Dev Ji did spread throughout India and were perceived threats to the ruling Muslim Emperors of the time. In 1605, the Muslim Emperor Jahangir tortured the Fifth Sikh Guru, Siri Guru Arjan Dev Ji and the Guru became the first martyr of the religion. His martyrdom was followed by the formulation of the concept of Saint - Soldier by the Sixth Guru, Siri Guru Hargobind Sahib Ji. In this concept, the Sikh is not only a disciple who is attempting to live righteously but also standing in defence of the religion. One is a saint first and only a soldier if the righteousness is threatened.

The Eighth Sikh Guru, Siri Guru Teg Bahadur Ji was martyred by the Muslim Emperor of India Aurangzeb. Aurangzeb had ideas of turning India into a Muslim state and started enforcing conversion of the population to Islam by force. The Hindu population and religion itself was under threat of extinction. The Hindu Brahmins (High Priests) came to Siri Guru Teg Bahadur Ji and asked for his help. They had met and meditated together for a lengthy period and understood from the meditation that a Spiritual Master would have to sacrifice themselves to save the religion. The Guru instructed them to tell Aurangzeb they would instruct all Hindus to convert to Islam only if the Sikh Guru would himself embrace the Muslim religion. Knowing that he would not return alive, Siri Guru Teg Bahadur Ji passed the responsibilities of the Guruship to his son Siri Guru Gobind Singh Ji. Aurangzeb ordered the arrest of the Guru and in July of 1675 he was arrested along with some accompanying Sikhs and kept in an iron cage. Several seasoned royal Muslim missionaries were deputed to persuade the Guru to give up his

faith and accept Islam or be prepared to die a terrible death. To shake Siri Guru Teg Bahadur's resolve, three of his accompanying Sikhs were brutally tortured in front of the Guru's eyes. Having failed to persuade the Guru to convert, Siri Guru Teg Bahadur Ji was beheaded in Chandni Chowk in Delhi on November 11, 1675. The Guru became known as "Hind Di Chador" or "Shield of India" as he gave up his life to protect the right to religious freedom on the Indian Subcontinent. Gurdwara Sis Ganj stands at the location in Delhi where the Guru was beheaded.

This act of selflessness, along with the revolutionary thinking and practices initiated by Siri Guru Nanak Dev Ji and the subsequent Gurus, brought the Sikh Religion to the forefront even further, and in Hindu families of the time, it became very common to raise the eldest son as a Sikh giving both status and respect to the Sikh Philosophy and the principles.

In 1705, the Tenth Sikh Guru, Siri Guru Gobind Singh Ji, was besieged by the Muslim armies in Anandpur Sahib over several months and his eldest two sons died in the ensuing battles on December 24th, 1705. The younger two sons were with their grandmother and separated from the Guru when the evacuation of the fort happened. They got lost and were given refuge by a local villager who eventually turned them over to the Muslim authorities for a reward. Both younger sons were then taken before the Governor of the State and threatened with torture if they did not convert and embrace Islam. Even at the tender ages of 7 and 9, knowing that their grandfather had been beheaded for Religious freedom, their faith did not falter, and they were sentenced to be bricked alive. They were martyred on December 26, 1705. A Gurdwara stands in the city of Fatehgarh Sahib in Punjab commemorating this event. Each year, special ceremonies and parades are held in commemoration of the four sons of Siri Guru Gobind Singh Ji. I happened to be blessed to be present at the 300 year commemorative celebrations which were very a very moving and solemn event. The commitment to the faith and the gravity of the event was not lost on the minds of thousands who walked solemnly chanting and praying through the streets of Fatehgarh Sahib.

It is the martyrdoms faced by the Sikh Gurus and their Sikhs for freedom of Religious practice that did then shape the tenth Guru's philosophy to stand in self-defence of one's rights and beliefs and lead to the creation of the Khalsa. We will discuss this formulation in the coming months.

I wish all to have a healthy and happy Holiday season with all the best for the upcoming New Year.

Waheguru Ji Ka Khalsa, Waheguru Ji Ki Fateh!

(The Pure Ones belong to the Almighty; All Victory is that of the Almighty)

Shalom!

*Dr. Harjot Kaur Singh*

Lil Faider Interfaith Scholar-in-Residence



## Lil Faider Scholar-in-Residence Dr. Harjot Kaur Singh

One of the most important celebrations of the Sikh Religion is the birthday of Siri Guru Gobind Singh Ji, the tenth Sikh Master, for it is during his Guruship that the unique and distinct practices and principles of the Sikh Faith did manifest. The historical and social context of the Indian subcontinent did shape the fundamentals of the Religion and the actions of the Guru.

On the night of December 22, 1666, a Divine splendid light lit up the night sky and Pir Bhikan Shah, a Muslim mystic, took notice during his prayers and bowed. He and his followers then set out in the direction of the Indian State of Bihar as he knew a Prophet was born. He reached Patna Sahib where Siri Guru Gobind Singh Ji, the only child of the Ninth Sikh Guru, was born. The Muslim mystic approached the young infant with two earthen pots - one filled with water and one filled with milk - signifying the religions of Hinduism and Islam. The child smiled and put one hand on each of the earthen pots signifying equality. The Pir bowed in reverence and humility proclaiming the child as a Prophet who would stand for all humanity.

The tenth Master moved from Bihar to Anandpur Sahib in eastern Punjab. Here he grew and was educated in various languages such as Punjabi, Gurmukhi, Brij, Persian and Sanskrit. He was also skilled in Sikh Martial Arts (gatka), archery, hunting and weaponry. When he was nine years old, his father, the Ninth Sikh Guru, Siri Guru Teg Bahadur Ji was beheaded to protect the freedom of religion on the Indian subcontinent by the Muslim Emperor Aurangzeb. When Siri Guru Gobind Singh Ji held his father's severed head in his hands, he was only too aware of the unique heritage he had inherited - fearless martyrdom to defend the essential rights and beliefs. He also knew that the time had come to stand against injustice and cruelty with an appropriate response - to stand in defence.

In 1699, in the month of April during the Bhaishakhi celebration, Siri Guru Gobind Singh Ji did formulate the Khalsa. Ideologically, the Khalsa was created as a balanced combination of the ideals of a Saint-Soldier, of moral and spiritual excellence and militant valor or heroism of the highest order. The Khalsa symbolized in itself the determination to complete the social and religious revolution inaugurated by Guru Nanak - equality in the light of caste, creed or gender. The code of conduct along with the 5 K's or Articles of Faith prescribed for the newly created Khalsa was so devised as to impose a strict discipline on the Sikhs to ensure firm coherence and commitment on their part to the ideals of Sikhism. What was even more remarkable is that after creating the Khalsa, the Guru himself bowed humbly before the Khalsa asking to be baptised into its fold. This is the first time in history that a religious leader bowed before his creation. The Guru further resolved that he would feel worthy to be called Guru Gobind Singh only when any single member of his Khalsa Panth would successfully and undauntedly challenge the army of one hundred and twenty-five thousand opponents in the field. This

point was rightfully proven at battle Chamkaur Sahib when his two eldest sons challenged the Mughal forces and their allies, the hill Rajas.

Siri Guru Gobind Singh Ji was a great thinker, a writer, a philosopher, a soldier, and a Saint, but also a most humble and compassionate leader. Unlike many other Prophets, he never called himself God or 'the only son of God.' Instead he stated that all people were the children of God sharing God's Kingdom equally. For himself, he used the word 'slave' or servant of God. So compassionate was the Guru that any arrow fired from his quiver had a small amount of gold attached to it so that whosoever was wounded could afford medical attention or the family could afford burial. In battle, he always gave the opponent the opportunity to strike him three times first and then responded in defence.

Through his poetry he preached love and equality and a strictly ethical and moral code of conduct. He preached the worship of the One Supreme Being, deprecating idolatry and superstitious beliefs and observances. The glorification of the Sword itself which he eulogized as Bhagauti - the Divine Feminine Primal Power - was to secure fulfilment of God's justice. The Sword was never meant as a symbol of aggression, but of righteous action to preserve truth and virtue and was to be used only in self-defence, as a last resort. Siri Guru Gobind Singh Ji proclaimed in a Persian couplet in his Zafarnamah: *"When all other means have failed and yet justice is not in sight, it is then righteous to take to the sword."*

Although Siri Guru Gobind Singh Ji was a prolific writer and poet, in his humility, he did not include any of his writings in the Siri Guru Granth Sahib Ji. His writings are contained in a separate volume called the Siri Dasam Granth. He did dictate the final version of the Siri Guru Granth Sahib Ji and when his time to depart the earth came, he proclaimed to the Sikhs *"Under orders of the Almighty, the Panth (Religion) is to be lead in this way.. . All Sikhs are ordered to accept the Granth as their Eternal Guru..."*

The Guru left his earthly body on October 7, 1708 in Nanded, India. Historical Gurdwaras stand commemorating Siri Guru Gobind Singh Ji throughout the Indian subcontinent. Due to the fact that the Sikh religion initially followed a lunar calendar, the date of Guru Gobind Singh's birthday varied each year. In order to make a more consistent Gregorian date, the current commemoration of his birth occurs on January 5th each year. In the upcoming months, we will explore the concept of Khalsa, along with its creation, code of conduct, and the Articles of Faith in more detail.

Waheguru Ji Ka Khalsa, Waheguru Ji Ki Fateh! (The Pure Ones belong to the Almighty; All Victory is that of the Almighty)

Shalom!

*Dr. Harjot Kaur Singh*

Lil Faider Interfaith Scholar-in-Residence





## Lil Faider Scholar-in-Residence Dr. Harjot Kaur Singh

The Siri Guru Granth Sahib Ji is very unique amongst the great world scriptures. It is Supreme Spiritual Authority for the Sikhs and the head of the Sikh Religion. For Sikhs, the Siri Guru Granth Sahib Ji is considered the Living Guru of the Sikhs, and is treated as such with utmost reverence and respect. Written and authenticated by the Sikh Gurus themselves, it is truly pluralistic in its writings as it is the only religious scripture to contain writings of spiritual saints who belonged to other religious faiths. As such it is seen as a Scripture with both universal message and teaching - a beacon of Truth and Light for all humanity.

When the Founder of the Sikh Religion, Siri Guru Nanak Dev Ji, began traveling throughout Southeast Asia, the Middle East and Africa, he traveled with his two interfaith companions - one a Hindu, and one a Muslim. Aside from teaching of oneness and equality of humanity, Siri Guru Nanak Dev Ji began making commentary on the sociopolitical scenarios that he encountered. This came in the form of Bani - the Word from God. "As the Word of the Beloved Lord comes to me, so do I express it, O Lalo" (Guru Nanak, SGGS Ji page 722). He sung the Word or the Shabad and the hymn then was recorded. While having discourse with the Yogis (who were renunciates of their family and possessions and very surprised that Guru Nanak Dev Ji was advocating a spiritual lifestyle even as a householder), he was asked who was his teacher and to whom did he consider himself a disciple. Siri Guru Nanak Dev Ji responded that "the Shabad is my Guru upon whom I lovingly attach my focus and attention and I am a disciple to the Shabad" (Guru Nanak, SGGS, page 942). During his travels, the compilation of the writings was collected into a book called the Adi Granth (Primal Scripture).

The succession of the Guruship passed along and the Fifth Guru, Siri Guru Arjan Dev Ji, realized that a standardized, authenticated collection of the Guru's writings known as Gurbani was needed to preserve the integrity of the Shabad. He then compiled the writings of all the four Gurus prior to him while adding his own writings and set each hymn to Indian Classical musical scales called Ragas. The Gurus considered divine worship through music the best means of attaining a state of bliss. There are 31 Ragas in the Siri Guru Granth Sahib. The hymns became kirtan (sacred music), and when sung or listened to with devotion and undivided attention, they can link the individual's consciousness with God. A mind may become stable and enjoy the peace of the Divine Presence, as listening to the hymns can exert a powerful influence on the mind and help to establish its communion with God.

Within the Ragas, the scripture is arranged by order of the Sikh Guru with the Shabads of the Hindu and Muslim Saints placed next. Each Shabad was vetted by Siri Guru Arjan Dev Ji to ensure that it invoked God Consciousness and a Naad Vibration or Divine energy frequency, and only Shabads of the Interfaith Holy men meeting these criteria were included. Written in Gurmukhi script, the scripture contains many different languages including Persian, Arabic, Sanskrit, and Punjabi.

Siri Guru Arjan Dev Ji did install the compilation, then known as the Adi Granth, in the Golden Temple on August 30, 1604. At the time of installation, Siri Guru Arjan Dev Ji instructed the Sikhs to understand that the writings were the embodiment of the Gurus themselves. He himself began to place the Adi Granth on his own bed and slept on the floor next to it.

The Tenth Guru, Siri Guru Gobind Singh Ji, dictated the entire scripture in 1705, and when his time to leave the earth came, he passed the Guruship to the Siri Guru Granth Sahib Ji, declaring that no human would ever be the Guru of the Sikhs and that the Scripture was the Guru. This solidified the concept started by Siri Guru Nanak Dev Ji that the Word was the Guru. One of the important facts is that the Siri Guru Granth Sahib is the one world religious scripture that was recorded during the lifetime of the Gurus and authenticated by them. It is unchangeable and unalterable. Max Macauliffe, a world renowned British Scholar of Sikh Studies and history, stated that "The Sikh religion differs as regards the authenticity of its dogmas from most other theological systems. Many of the great teachers the world has known, have not left a line of their own composition and we only know what they taught through tradition or second-hand information....the founder of Christianity did not reduce his doctrines to writing and for them we are obliged to trust to the gospels according to Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. The Arabian Prophet did not himself reduce to writing the chapters of the Quran. They were written or compiled by his adherents and followers. But the compositions of the Sikh Gurus are preserved and we know at firsthand what they taught."

In all Gurdwaras and many Sikh homes, the Siri Guru Granth Sahib Ji is read every day. No Sikh ceremony is regarded as complete unless it is performed in the presence of the Siri Guru Granth Sahib Ji. On a daily basis, Sikhs receive a hukam or divine order in the form of a hymn from the Siri Guru Granth Sahib Ji, either in a Gurdwara or at home. The hukam, taken by opening to a random page, is reflected upon by the Sikh during the entire day. Every aspect of human life experience is addressed within the 5,864 hymns whether it is birth, death, happiness, health, wealth, poverty, trial, tribulation, five vices, marriage, evolution of soul, prayer, meditation, creation, seasons and nature. Moreover, the guidance for how to live and maintain a spiritual and truthful life is given as well. Sikhs will reflect on the teachings of the Siri Guru Granth Sahib Ji to help deal with whatever issue they are dealing with in their lives.

The Siri Guru Granth Sahib Ji is 1,430 pages of scriptural wisdom and teachings which talk about God, emphasize meditation on God's Name, give guidance on the moral, ethical, and spiritual development of the human soul and life experience, spiritual salvation and unity with the Divine. Its teachings are a torch of Truth to help humanity out of the Kalijug (age of Darkness) to a life of peace, tranquility and spiritual enlightenment.

Shalom!

*Dr. Harjot Kaur Singh*

Lil Faider Interfaith Scholar-in-Residence



## Lil Faider Scholar-in-Residence Dr. Harjot Kaur Singh

In the month of March on the Indian subcontinent, the Hindu majority celebrates the festival of Holi - or festival of colors. The Tenth Sikh Guru, Siri Guru Gobind Singh Ji, established the festival of Holla Mahalla, the festival of military charge, which occurs the day after the Hindu Festival. In 1701, in the midst of fighting both the Muslim Emperor Aurungzeb and the Hindu Hill Kings, Siri Guru Gobind Singh Ji established the festival to stage the skills of his army with mock battles and a military parade. The current day descendants of Guru Gobind Singh's army are a unique order amongst the Sikhs called Nihung Singhs. They maintain their military readiness to stand against injustice and tyranny and to be ready to fight for the religion. From the time of Siri Guru Gobind Singh Ji, they are distinctly robed in dark royal blue clothes with large turbans. They carry both traditional and modern weapons while being trained in the Sikh martial art (Gatka), weaponry, archery and horseback. Holla Mahalla festivities take place yearly in the city of Anandpur Sahib, Punjab.

The very first and most famous Nihung was Baba Deep Singh Ji. At the young age of 12, he was trained by Siri Guru Gobind Singh Ji not only in Sikh philosophy and scripture but also in military skills, martial arts and weaponry. He was baptized by Siri Guru Gobind Singh Ji personally. Baba Deep Singh was also very skilled in meditation and had an impressive daily spiritual practice. He meditated on the Sikh scripture Jaap Sahib so much that it gave him both spiritual and physical prowess. When it was time to complete the scriptures, Siri Guru Gobind Singh Ji did dictate the entire Siri Guru Granth Sahib Ji to Baba Deep Singh Ji who wrote all 1430 pages of dictation by hand.

In 1755, Ahmad Shah Abdali, the Muslim emperor of Afghanistan, attacked India for the fifth time. After looting many Indian cities including Delhi, he brought back with him gold, jewelry, and thousands of captured young women. When Baba Deep Singh Ji learned about this atrocity, he took a group of Sikhs and ambushed Ahmad Shah's forces. Baba Deep Singh Ji and his men freed much of Ahmad Shah's stolen goods and liberated the prisoners, returning them to their homes.

Ahmad Shah Abdali was able to escape to Lahore. Angered by the attack from the Sikhs, he decided to destroy the Sikh community. In order to destroy the source of the Sikh's spiritual strength, he ordered his General, Jahan Khan, to destroy the Golden Temple. Following orders, in 1757, Jahan Khan proceeded to Amritsar with heavy artillery. Many Sikhs died trying to defend the Golden Temple but unfortunately temple was captured and the holy pool of water was filled with dirt.

When Baba Deep Singh learned about this disturbing news, he immediately declared his intention of expelling the Afghans and re-establishing the sanctity and sacredness of the Golden Temple. He took a vow not to come back alive without fulfilling this mission. Baba Deep Singh Ji did a formal prayer promising to not rest until he had liberated the Golden Temple from the hands of the Muslims.

Although Baba Deep Singh Ji was seventy-five years old, he still had the strength of a young warrior. He gathered a large group of Sikhs and advanced towards the city of Amritsar. By the time they reached ten miles from Amritsar, their numbers had risen to about five thousand. At this time, he drew a line on the ground with his khanda (double edged sword), and asked only those who were willing to fight and die to cross the line. All of the Sikhs there crossed the line eagerly. Baba Deep Singh Ji then recited the Hymn: "Those who wish to play the game of love with the Beloved, come with your head in your palm. If you wish your feet to travel this path, don't delay in accepting to give your head." (Guru Nanak, SGGS pg 1412)

When news of Baba Deep Singh Ji's intentions reached Jahan Khan, he immediately mobilized an army of 20,000 men and proceeded towards them. Baba Deep Singh Ji's army intercepted Jahan Khan's forces just about five miles from Amritsar. At this point, there was a clash between both sides. Baba Deep Singh Ji fought with his 32 pound steel double-edged sword. Each Sikh fought with such great valor and courage that the enemy was almost defeated. During the midst of battle, a large army of reinforcements arrived for Jahan Khan's men, turning the odds against the Sikhs. Yet the Sikhs continued fighting and advancing towards Amritsar.

During the clash, one of the Mogul commanders, Jamal Khan, attacked Baba Deep Singh Ji. As they fought, both men swung their weapons with great force, leaving both of their heads severed from their bodies. After seeing this scene, a young Sikh warrior called out to Baba Deep Singh Ji, reminding him of his vow to reach the Golden Temple. Upon hearing this, Baba Deep Singh Ji immediately stood up, holding his head on his left palm while holding his sword upright in his right hand. He began reciting the scripture Jaap Sahib and with the strength the prayer imbued, continued fighting and moving towards Golden Temple. Upon seeing the sight of Baba Deep Singh Ji, most of the men in the Mogul army fled away in terror. Baba Deep Singh Ji was able to continue fighting and reached the Golden Temple. Once there, he placed his head at the walkway of the Golden Temple, he breathed his last breath and died as a martyr.

Baba Deep Singh is the most venerated Nihung Singh of the Guru's Army and was the ideal example of the Saint-Soldier concept given by Siri Guru Gobind Singh Ji. His spiritual practice and bravery as a courageous martyr is a reminder to all Sikhs of unflinching dedication to the Sikh Principles- how to live and die with dignity. Historical Gurdwaras commemorate where Baba Deep Singh Ji meditated, where he drew the line in sand and vowed to never give up, where he was beheaded, where he placed his head on the Golden temple and where his body was cremated.

Waheguru Ji Ka Khalsa, Waheguru Ji Ki Fateh!

(The Pure Ones belong to the Almighty; All Victory is that of the Almighty)

Shalom!

*Dr. Harjot Kaur Singh*

Lil Faider Interfaith Scholar-in-Residence

You may reach Dr. Singh at [dr.singh@bethzedec.ca](mailto:dr.singh@bethzedec.ca).





## Lil Faider Scholar-in-Residence Dr. Harjot Kaur Singh

In the month of April, the Sikhs celebrate Vaisakhi. Initially known as the beginning of the lunar month of the harvest season, in 1699, Siri Guru Gobind Rai Ji, the Tenth Sikh Guru, sanctified it by the formation of the Khalsa (Brother/Sisterhood of the Pure Ones) and the Amrit Sanchar (Baptismal Ceremony). After the beheading of the Ninth Sikh Guru for the sake of freedom of religious worship on the Indian subcontinent, the Tenth Guru saw the need to create a

calibre of consciousness of individuals with purity of word, thought and deed known as Khalsa which would serve as a religious brotherhood of Saint-Soldiers standing united, equal, casteless and genderless to fight oppression with righteousness and a unique identity.

On March 30, 1699, Siri Guru Gobind Rai Ji called all Sikhs together from India for a congregation in Sri Anandpur Sahib in the foothills of Punjab. There, in the congregation the Guru appeared with a large unsheathed sword and in a thundering voice asked which Sikh would offer his head to the Guru. Initially, the congregation was stunned but after asking three times, a Sikh named Daya Ram stood up and unconditionally offered his head to the Guru. The Guru took him to the tent where a large blow and thud was heard. The Guru then emerged with his sword dripping with blood. He asked for another head, and another until five different Sikhs offered their heads. Many Sikhs thought the Guru had gone mad and ran to complain to his mother. The Guru then brought all five Sikhs out of the tent dressed in splendid saffron colored garments, with radiant faces fully intact. The Guru explained they had offered their heads humbly and unconditionally to the Guru and now they were to be given true Glory. The time had come to create the Khalsa and now initiation would be through the sword.

The Tenth Master proceeded with the Amrit Ceremony. The Amrit (Sacred Nectar of Immortality and Bliss) was prepared by stirring the double edged sword (Khanda) in an iron bowl filled with water while reciting the sacred scriptures. The Amrit was prepared by infusing the strength of the steel sword along with the sacred vibration of the Shabad (scripture) into it so that the Khalsa would be brave, righteous, and stand against injustice. The Wife of the Guru, Mata Jito Ji, reminded the Guru that the Khalsa also required sweetness and gentleness and added crystallized sugar to the nectar.

After creating the Amrit, each of the five knelt before the Guru sitting on his left knee and was sprinkled with the Amrit – five times to their eyes, five times to their heads, and five times in the palms to drink. Each time they received the Amrit, they recited the greeting of the Khalsa-Waheguru Ji Ka Khalsa, Waheguru Ji Ki Fateh. Then all five were instructed to drink from the same bowl signifying the initiation to a casteless fraternity. The Guru then explained that the Khalsa would have Bana (unique identity with the five Kakars or Articles of Faith). He gave the Khalsa prayers (Bani - five in the ambrosial am hours, one at dusk and one prior to bed). He instructed the Khalsa to meditate on the Divine constantly (Simran) and do selfless service (Seva). The Guru instructed the Khalsa against the five Kurehits - not to cut hair from the body, not to eat

meat, not to drink alcohol, not to intake any intoxicants and not to commit adultery.

The Tenth Master instructed the Khalsa to practice arms and never turn their backs in the battlefield. The Khalsa was told to be ever ready to help the poor and protect those who seek their shelter. The Guru ordered the Khalsa to consider all caste standings erased and to become one family. Thus, all the men received the name Singh meaning lion/king and all women the name Kaur meaning lioness/princess.

After this instruction, the tenth master presented the five initial Khalsa as the Panj Piyara - the Five Beloved Ones. Amazingly, after presenting the five Beloved Ones, the Tenth Guru then stood in supplication and folded his hands before them asking for the Amrit and to become Khalsa. They were astonished by the request. The Guru repeated that he was the son of the Immortal Almighty and the Khalsa was created by Almighty and he wanted to join. The Panj Piyara then prepared the Amrit for the Guru and baptised him and from that point onwards he was known as Siri Guru Gobind Singh Ji. Never before had a religious leader bowed before his own charge and creation and so the Tenth Guru is venerated by the scriptures "Great Great is Guru Gobind Singh, He himself is both Master and Disciple."

In the days subsequent to the initial ceremony, 80,000 Sikhs took Amrit and joined the Khalsa brotherhood. It is the expectation of all Sikhs to be working towards the objective to become Khalsa. Both men and women can be baptised and once they are must carry the Five Kakars or five Articles of Faith on their person at all times. The five K's act as reminders to the Khalsa Sikh that they are to be ready at all times to fight injustice and tyranny both from within (via the five vices lust, anger, pride, greed and attachment) and externally as well. The first K is the Kesh or unshorn hair on the head of a Khalsa, a reminder of saintliness and an energetic magnifier for the body's own energy. The Kesh is covered with a turban as a royal crown of spirituality. The second K is the Kanga which is a wooden comb that serves to keep the hair neat and tidy but reminds the Khalsa to comb the deadwood from his/her ego each day to stay pure. The Third K is the Kara which is the iron bracelet worn on the arm to remind the Khalsa that they are only slave to the Almighty who is constantly watching their actions. The fourth K is the Khachhara which is a cotton boxer short worn to signify modesty and monogamy, and the fifth K is the Kirpan which is worshiped as the Sword of the Almighty representing the power of God. Never is it to be misused but to remind the Khalsa to stand for the rights of those oppressed.

The Tercentenary of the Khalsa was celebrated in Sri Anandpur Sahib on April 14, 1999 where over three million Sikhs commemorated the first Vaisakhi. I had both the privilege and honor to be on the main stage as we stood in prayer to commemorate the initial creation of the Khalsa. It remains as one of the highlights of my life as I stood in prayer but looked out upon the sea of turbans as we remembered the creation of the Tenth Guru just 300 years earlier.

Shalom!

Waheguru Ji Ka Khalsa, Waheguru Ji Ki Fateh!

(The Pure Ones belong to the Almighty; All Victory is that of the Almighty)

**Dr. Harjot Kaur Singh**

*Lil Faider Interfaith Scholar-in-Residence*

You may reach Dr. Singh at [dr.singh@bethtzedec.ca](mailto:dr.singh@bethtzedec.ca).



## Lil Faider Scholar-in-Residence Dr. Harjot Kaur Singh

In the last month of April, the Sikhs celebrate Vaisakhi and the formalization of the Khalsa by the Tenth Sikh Guru, Siri Guru Gobind Singh Ji. All over the world, Sikhs will hold special celebrations, even after the date to commemorate this important event. Most Sikh communities do hold special Vaisakh Day Parades also known as *Nagar Kirtans* where the procession is started with the *Panj Piyaras* (the Five beloved Ones) with a float

for the *Siri Guru Granth Sahib Ji* and then the community or *Sangat* follows with several floats singing hymns along the way. Often these *Nagar Kirtans* are held in accordance to weather permitting, and in Calgary, the Sikh Nagar Kirtan is usually held each year in May. The NE parade route is marked by numerous stalls for free food and *Langar* and a food drive for the Interfaith food Bank is also held. This *Nagar Kirtan* is usually held on a Saturday in May.

Vaisakhi marks the formalization of the baptismal ceremony of the Sikhs and initiation into the Khalsa. This ceremony gives the completion to the foundation of being a Sikh with the four pillars of Sikhism being completed- *Bana* (identity), *Bani* (the scriptures), *Seva* (selfless service) and *Simran* (meditation).

*Bana*, or the actual physical form for Sikhs with the Turban and Beard, but also most importantly, the Five Articles of Faith, give the Sikh the uniform to maintain his/her spirituality and truthfulness. Just as a child wears a school uniform and is expected to conduct his/herself in a principled manner, similarly the *Bana* is a reminder of belonging the school of Righteousness of the Divine. This was sanctified by Guru Gobind Singh Ji in the Amrit Ceremony. When a Sikh takes Amrit, he or she is beginning their spiritual journey towards merger with the Divine.

The *Bani*, or Scriptures play an integral part of a Sikh's daily life and practice. Siri Guru Gobind Singh Ji did pass the Spiritual authority of the Sikhs to the *Siri Guru Granth Sahib ji* which is the Scripture written by the Sikh Gurus and some Hindu, Muslim and Sikh saints. Reciting the scripture, such as the five morning prayers that a Baptised Sikh will do each morning, along with prayers at dusk, and the final prayer prior to bed, become an integral part in the daily life of a Sikh. The *Siri Guru Granth Sahib Ji* is 1430 pages of Scriptural Wisdom that touches each and every aspect of human existence and gives the Sikh the methodology to live a sacred and spiritual life while traveling through the human life journey from birth to death. The *Bani* gives comfort, wisdom, healing, inspiration and instruction and ultimately elevates the body, mind and soul.

*Seva*, or selfless service, is an important part of the Sikh life. That service done to help another without the thought of reward or remuneration breeds an aspect of kindness and compassion to one's fellow humankind. This principal was initially started as *Langar*, or

Free Kitchen, but extends out to all areas of the life of a Sikh. If you have wealth, wisdom, or time, it is important to share your gifts and serve the rest of humanity with them.

*Simran*, or meditation and really the constant remembrance of the Divine, is very important for the Sikh, as the Gurus and the *Siri Guru Granth Sahib Ji* instructed the Sikhs to be householders and live in the world but remember the Almighty in whatever they do and wherever they may go. The constant remembrance of the Divine, even breathing and chanting the Name of God while working and playing merges each and every heartbeat of the Sikh with the Divine making what the Sikh is doing Divine and giving the Sikh that Divine Energy and blessing as well.

This concept of *Simran* has been really summarized well in a hymn written by Siri Guru Arjan Dev Ji in the prayer *Sukhmani Sahib* (Peace Lagoon)

*"Praise the Formless Lord in your mind.*

*O my mind, make this your true occupation.*

*Let your tongue become pure by chanting & drinking in the Ambrosial Nectar of the Name of God.*

*Your soul shall be forever peaceful.*

*With your eyes, see the wondrous play of your Lord and Master.*

*In the Company of the Holy, all other associations vanish.*

*With your feet, walk in the Way of the Lord.*

*Sins are washed away, chanting the Lord's Name, even for a moment.*

*So do the Lord's Work, and listen to the Lord's Sermon.*

*In the Lord's Court, O Nanak, your face shall be radiant."* SGGS Ji page 281.

With the four pillars of *Bana*, *Bani*, *Seva* and *Simran*, the daily routine and lifestyle have been set for the Sikh to experience union with the Divine while still being a regular contributor to society at large. Sikhism, is thus not only a Religion, but a way of life with discipline, making it a *Dharma* (discipline). Underlying this Dharma, is the meditation and remembrance of the Almighty in a manner such that every action, every thought, every word of a Sikh is to be righteous and divine. This then allows for the evolution for the human soul. This is the aim and goal for every Sikh. Really, the essence of the Sikh religion is the relationship of the individual soul and its relationship with the Divine, and the ultimate merger of the human soul with God Consciousness - the merger of the finite human soul with the Infinite Divine Soul. This is attained by outward discipline (*Bana*), service to others (*Seva*), meditation and prayer (*Bani*), and constant remembrance of the Divine (*Simran*). Meditation and prayer play a very integral role in the journey along the way to this merger and this is why meditation and prayer is a daily spiritual practice for Sikhs. As Siri Guru Nanak Dev Ji, stated in the last lines of the *Japji Sahib* prayer:

*"Those who have meditated on the Naam, the Name of the Lord, and departed after having worked by the sweat of their brows-O Nanak, their faces are radiant in the Court of the Lord, and many are saved along with them!"* SGGS Ji page 8

**Dr. Harjot Kaur Singh**

You may reach Dr. Singh at [dr.singh@bethtzedec.ca](mailto:dr.singh@bethtzedec.ca).





## Lil Faider Scholar-in-Residence Dr. Harjot Kaur Singh

In the month of June this year, the Sikhs worldwide will commemorate the Thirtieth anniversary of Indira Gandhi's attack on the Harimandir Sahib, known as the Golden Temple of Amritsar, the Sikhs most sacred Gurdwara and Holy Land.

Indira Gandhi's discontent of the Sikhs dated back to 1975 when President Fakhruddin Ali Ahmend, acting on the advice of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, declared a state of national Emergency in India under Article 352(1) of the constitution on the grounds of "internal disturbance". In the largest democratic nation of the world, elections were suspended and civil liberties were withdrawn by decree. The gave Indira Gandhi extraordinary powers for nearly two years and is one the most controversial periods of India's history. During that time, the Sikhs of Punjab were the only group in India who actively and publically protested the degradation of democracy and they suffered heavily for this.

After the restoration of elections in 1977, Indira Gandhi was voted out of government and there followed a period of great political and economic hardship in India. Because of the farming success and hard work of Sikh famers, the flourishing "green revolution", India averted another national famine. However, it resulted in concentration of wealth and power in the Sikh's home state of Punjab. When Indira Gandhi was once again Prime Minister in 1980, she set out to neutralize what she perceived to be a growing political threat. The farmers of Punjab were forced by law to sell wheat only to the Federal Government at a reduced rate. The Federal Government then turned and sold it throughout India at a highly profitable rate. The historical five rivers of Punjab were diverted away from the state, along with the electricity that it produced. The boundaries of the State of Punjab were re-drawn to compromise the voting areas of Sikh majority. And at a time when the Officer's Corp of the Indian Army was 93% Sikh, a new law was passed to reduce that percentage to reflect the national ethnicity where Sikhs were 2% of the population. Across the Punjab these harsh policies resulted in financial hardship, economic instability and high rates of unemployment. The Sikhs once again took to the streets in protest. Their political party, the Akali Dal, drew up a list of grievances known as the "Anandpur Sahib Resolution" in 1982. The Dharam Yudh Morcha was launched – a nonviolent protest against the Central Government demanding redress.

The centre of the Morcha was the Golden Temple in Amritsar, the spiritual and temporal seat of Sikh authority. The active rallies and congregations fueled a resurgence of the practice of faith and also became ways to voice the grievances of the Sikhs. What resulted was a perilous mix of religious fervour and growing militancy. Gandhi quickly distanced herself from the Sikhs, proclaimed Sikhs as separatists and actively sought to crush them. In the months that followed, the Sikh community was met with subterfuge and Machiavellian tactics from all sides, leaving them afraid, confused, and highly alienated from their country.

Fearing the growing political and military rhetoric, several of the International Sikh leadership asked Gandhi to promise she would never attack the Golden Temple. She

promised this, but then proceeded to command Operation Blue Star using the excuse that some Sikhs within the Golden Temple complex had amassed weapons. One hundred thousand Indian Army troops moved into the Punjab surrounding the Golden Temple on March 25 1984. On June 1, Sikh pilgrims converged on the Golden Temple to commemorate of the martyrdom of the Fifth Sikh Guru despite this risk, and over ten thousand Sikhs were being housed in the Temple complex. It was at this time of maximum civilian exposure, the night of June 5, 1984, that Operation Blue Star was initiated. A complete communication blackout was ordered, and the Punjab was effectively cut off from the rest of the world. Phone lines were cut, journalists were expelled and the state borders were sealed.

Operation Blue Star was a highly planned military attack on the Golden Temple complex that lasted all night and well into the next day. The Indian Army met stiff resistance from the Sikhs and responded with a full-scale tank assault. In the early morning of June 6, the Akal Thakat, or Sikh Supreme throne of Temporal Authority, was entirely demolished and although the Sikhs within the Golden Temple fought back, the Indian Army overpowered them. As reported by eyewitness accounts, the sacred pool of water was left red with blood and bodies were everywhere over the broken marble. The treasury of the Golden Temple, which housed many priceless historical treasures, was destroyed and looted. And although fighting had now died down, the central library complex was mysteriously burned down. Many priceless manuscripts, some in the Guru's own handwriting were lost forever.

The number of people who lost their lives in Operation Blue Star will never be known. The Army refused to let the Red Cross enter the complex and instead cremated the dead en masse and without ceremony before the bodies could be identified. Family members were not allowed to claim the remains or perform any traditional funeral rites. It is clear that thousands lost their lives in the Temple complex, with the official number being 1,000 but a more realistic estimate being over 5,000.

Elsewhere across Punjab, thousands of Sikhs were killed in the army operation at 42 Gurdwaras at the same time as the Golden Temple. Operation Blue Star was followed by a campaign of violence against any Sikh groups or leaders who could possibly rally the Sikhs back together. These Sikhs were imprisoned, tortured, and "disappeared" during fake police encounters for just being Sikhs. It is estimated that 250,000 Sikhs were killed or disappeared during the six years following the attack on the Golden Temple. An entire generation of the Sikh Community was terrorized, displaced, or killed.

Even though 30 years have passed, the pain of this experience echoes through the Sikh community. No family with roots in Punjab was untouched, and each one of us suffers our own scars. Even though human-rights groups have been actively involved since the 1990s, mystery still shrouds many of the events of that time, people are still missing, and wrongs have not been addressed. The Sikhs are resilient people and have rebounded socially, economically, and politically. However June 6 will live as a date of sorrow and sacrifice in Sikh history for all time to come.

*Dr. Harjot Kaur Singh*

You may reach Dr. Singh at [dr.singh@bethtzedec.ca](mailto:dr.singh@bethtzedec.ca).





## Lil Faider Scholar-in-Residence Dr. Harjot Kaur Singh

My year as the Lil Faider Interfaith Scholar in Residence has come to a close. As I look back on the year, I realize the impact of this program. It is truly important to be literate especially from a faith and religious perspective in a multicultural country such as Canada. When we understand each other, and understand each other's faith and practices, then we can truly live together in diversity and respect.

I am grateful to the Beth Tzedec Synagogue and its congregants. You have all opened your hearts and minds to me at the Synagogue in every event. Whether it was the lecture series on Sikhism, Tefillin & Turban tying event, cooking class or the tour to the Sikh Gurdwara, I was impressed with the earnest desire of everyone to understand the practice and principles of the Sikh Religion. It is fitting that the close of the program was with a mock Sikh-Jewish wedding showcasing both the faith traditions but perhaps really symbolizing a merger of communities in respect and understanding. Personally, I do think that Sikhism and Judaism share significant commonalities in how they have evolved, given both were minority religions and, unfortunately, have faced persecution throughout history. I am very grateful to the entire community as I have always been treated with respect for my beliefs and practices as a Sikh. I also did learn about Judaism and the practices and beliefs as well. During the entire program, we highlighted both the similarities and differences amongst the religions and their principles. It takes a very open and generous community to open their house of worship to another religion and to show respect to very different practices and beliefs. Due to this openness, I was able to teach and educate without any type of judgement or prejudice, and for this I am truly grateful.

Finally, I am very grateful to both Rabbi Shaul Osadchey for the formulation of the Interfaith Scholar in Residence Program and to Lil Faider for being the Patron of the program. Rabbi Osadchey was very instrumental in formulating the classes and open to exploring all aspects of Sikh practices and beliefs. Lil Faider was present for all the sessions and is a great champion of interfaith dialogue and religious literacy. I am thankful to them both.

I enjoyed the entire Interfaith Scholar in Residence Program. In fact, I felt that the congregation became my family - spiritual brothers and sisters who essentially are striving for the same Divine connection I am striving for. The very essence of the Sikh religion teaches the respect of all religions and their

respective discipline, and during this program, if I was able to encourage anyone to practice their own faith with more discipline and awareness, then as a Sikh, I have fulfilled my duty and responsibility. For this opportunity, I am truly grateful.

Thank you all once again.  
Shalom!

Waheguru Ji Ka Khalsa, Waheguru Ji Ki Fateh!  
(The Pure Ones belong to the Almighty; All Victory is that of the Almighty)

## *Dr. Harjot Kaur Singh*

*Lil Faider Interfaith Scholar in Residence  
October 2013 to June 2014*



*Rabbi Shaul Osadchey, Scholar-in-Residence Dr. Harjot Singh, Lil Faider*  
Rabbi Shaul Osadchey and Lil Faider were presented with a sarropa, the orange sash, signifying the highest honour bestowed by the Sikh community.